
THE
BROAD RIVER
REVIEW

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The Literary Review of Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, North Carolina

THE BROAD RIVER REVIEW

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EDITORS' NOTE

With this 2011 edition, the *Broad River Review* celebrates forty-three years of existence, and ten years under its present name. Through the years, earlier names included *One Little Candle* and *Reflections*. The *Broad River Review* is proud to offer an outlet for our undergraduate students, faculty, staff, and local community members. In recent years, however, our scope has broadened to include regional and national writers. Maintaining this balance of university-affiliated writers and non-affiliated writers is important to us.

Each year, the *Broad River Review* recognizes a few students for outstanding achievement by publishing their works. The J. Calvin Koonts Poetry Award is awarded to a senior English major at Gardner-Webb University whose group of poems is judged most outstanding by a committee of department members. The *Broad River Review* Editors' Prizes in Poetry and Fiction are selected from among all Gardner-Webb student submissions for a given issue.

This year, the *Broad River Review* began a new contest, The Rash Awards, named in honor of Ron Rash, a 1976 graduate of Gardner-Webb University. Rash's first published poem, "Last Night Ride," appeared in the pages of this literary review the year of his graduation. Since then, of course, Rash has worked tirelessly to become a prize-winning writer and *New York Times* bestseller. So far, he has published eleven books in all – three books of poetry, four books of short stories, and four novels. Upon the publication of *Serena* in 2008, Pat Conroy said, "Serena catapults [Rash] to the front ranks of the best American novelists." Since Rash's fiction and poetry are both regarded highly, we decided to offer awards in both genres.

We would like to thank George Singleton and Keith Flynn for serving as judges for The Rash Awards in Fiction and Poetry, respectively. Singleton selected Christine Bates, of Winterville, North Carolina, to receive the fiction award, while Flynn picked Sarah Gordon, of Athens, Georgia, as winner of the poetry award. Congratulations to both winners, who received \$500 each and shared the stage with Ron Rash this past October at the Ron Rash Festival, the inaugural event of the Southern Appalachian Culture Series at Gardner-Webb University. We would also like to thank all of the writers who entered the contest, as it was well supported in its initial year. A full list of finalists appears at the end of this Editor's Note. Our next contest period will coincide with our regular reading period of August through October 2011. Please see the advertisement on the final page of this issue for additional information.

Finally, the editors would like to thank the Department of English Language and Literature for its continued support, both financially and in spirit. The editors would also like to thank university administration for its sustained backing of a literary review, especially during difficult economic times when some university-sponsored publications are not surviving.

FINALISTS FOR THE RASH AWARDS

Fiction

Ben E. Campbell, *Pearisburg, Virginia*
 Casey Clabough, *Appomattox, Virginia*
 Erica Plouffe Lazure, *Exeter, New Hampshire*
 Thomas Rain Crowe, *Cullowhee, North Carolina*
 Thomas McConnell, *Spartanburg, South Carolina*
 Steve Mitchell, *Winston Salem, North Carolina*
 Jan B. Parker, *Fuquay Varina, North Carolina*
 Jon Sealy, *Glen Allen, Virginia*
 Robert Wallace, *Durham, North Carolina*

Poetry

Kathy Ackerman, *Tryon, North Carolina*
 Peter Bergquist, *Los Angeles, California*
 Catherine Carter, *Cullowhee, North Carolina*
 Jessie Carty, *Charlotte, North Carolina*
 Don Colburn, *Portland, Oregon*
 Thomas Rain Crowe, *Cullowhee, North Carolina*
 Jane Hicks, *Blountville, Tennessee*
 Ellarine Lockie, *Sunnyvale, California*
 Laura Lomax, *Greensboro, North Carolina*
 Marsha Matthews, *Dalton, Georgia*
 Valerie Nieman, *Greensboro, North Carolina*
 Grace C. Ocasio, *Charlotte, North Carolina*
 Kristen Staby Rembold, *Charlottesville, Virginia*
 Maureen A. Sherbondy, *Raleigh, North Carolina*
 Jeffrey T. Williams, *Goldsboro, North Carolina*

SARAH GORDON

Apertures: Andalusia
for Flannery O'Connor

Each day the eye finds fresh fare,
filling the homely bowl
of routine with slivers of light
and shade so that even the cracks
in the plaster are crooked roads
to somewhere:
A car shudders up
the dusty drive, cadenced
voices pass the time of day
in the familiar dance,
gauging their moves, a bow,
a do-si-do around the corners
of the room, as glasses perspire
onto the tabletop, a door shuts.
A boy or a man or just a figure
in the distance climbs
onto the sloping back
of a mule. Somebody brings
news that won't wait the telling,
that doesn't bear repeating
but will be repeated,
somebody's mouth a long O,
agape, agape, a love feast.
The bloody sun burns low
enough to set the woods on fire,
one arm grazes another
that doesn't want to be touched.
A plate of slightly rotting fruit
rests on the dining room table,
ink-smeared fingers endlessly
turn the pages of the newspaper
or carefully place the rosary
in the bureau drawer.

A former tenant visits,
he doesn't want to leave,
he stands for a long time
in the middle of the yard
running his fingers through
his greasy hair, clearing
his throat, repeating himself.
The tops of trees are silvered
by an antique light.
For a moment a peafowl
stands on one leg
on the roof of the barn,
a live weather vane,
another fans himself
in the front yard.
Nobody notices.
A window slams shut.
The hired man's children
in the back of the car
swat each other with comic books.
Is that smoke on the horizon,
do you smell it, no, well then.
A meal is served, nobody speaks.
Outside, it's early evening,
the bats lilt through the air
as though they are beautiful.
They are small black doors
into the dark.

The Night I Killed the Devil

"I see red dirt," my cousin, Janie, said. Her face was dirty and her arms and legs had faded-looking scars from all the mosquito bites. She was pretty, though. Slightly thick-looking, she wore cut-off jean shorts and a red tank top. She wasn't tan like me. Her hair was long and highlighted from the sun. It fell down her back in a tight ponytail. She was twelve-years old and knew a lot about life, so I paid attention. She smoked cigarettes she stole from her dad's country store. I think she had even been to first base with a boy.

We spent most of our time outdoors that summer, jumping on her trampoline and running up her parents' water bill. We sprayed each other with the water hose as much as we could, just to get some relief from the heat. Each day, Janie and I had some kind of adventure planned. We didn't have other children around to play with, so Janie and I kept each other company.

I don't remember why I chose that particular day. I just remember we got two shovels and started digging in Dad's front yard. It made sense to me at ten years old that the devil was the source of my misery. I prayed each night for two months and read every story in the Children's Bible, the one my Grandma bought for me, but I realized what I was doing wasn't working. I decided I would have to do something drastic if I wanted my parents back together. I'd have to kill the devil.

Dad's property was nestled in between corn fields and falling-down tobacco barns. His 1977, gold Audi sat barely visible through the tall, green grass. It had been there for years waiting for someone to give it life again. The brown, single-wide trailer settled just in front of the two-story farmhouse my dad was working on for my mom and me, just before she left with me, the piano, and all the pots and pans. The garden tub that was supposed to be in the upstairs master bathroom instead found a home in the front yard underneath the oak tree, next to my tire swing.

The house was mostly complete. It had walls, floors, windows, and doors. But there was no paint, no furniture, and no shrubs. No loveliness about the place. Mold had begun to climb the side of the house, etching its way to the inside. The front porch didn't have rocking chairs; rather, boxes and tools were scattered about as if someone were actively working to finish

the work started so many months before. Occasionally, someone would walk through it and discuss how pretty it could be.

Once I saw the red dirt, I felt optimistic. "We must be getting close," I said. "We can't have too much farther to go." Her shovel continued alongside mine. The two of us slung dirt until we had blisters on our tiny hands. I remember thinking that Janie seemed to be just as dedicated to finding him as I was.

"I don't understand why we look down toward hell when we pray," Janie said. She put her hands together and lowered her head to demonstrate her point. "Shouldn't we look up toward heaven?" We gave each other an understanding nod. I had never thought about it, but she made a good point. I did know, though, more than I wanted to about hell. My grandma took care of me a lot during the week while my mom worked or stayed in the bed, resting or, as she put it, just not feeling like going to work. If I stayed with my grandma on Saturday nights, I had to go to her church on Sunday. No exceptions.

Grandma would say the same words every Sunday from the pulpit. She meant it, she believed it, and I believed in her. I couldn't count how many times I heard "the devil is out to steal, kill, and destroy us all." With everything I understood hate to be, I hated him.

It was getting late that day, so Janie and I took a break from digging. We decided to walk down the dirt path behind my dad's property. It was pretty but smelled like cow manure because there were more cow pastures there than houses. "When are you going back to your mom's?" Janie asked. I didn't know the answer, so I just changed the subject.

We made our way to the pond to get our feet wet. We spent some time catching tadpoles and watching them swim around in our Mason jars. No one knew where we were, and that was fine. There was nothing around there to bother us except the cows.

Janie's parents were still together. No one she knew was divorced, so she was full of questions about my parents. She got to live in one place, but her life wasn't exactly easy. My uncle had been an alcoholic for years, so Janie's mother spoiled her and her older sister rotten. It was her mother's way of making things better. That would be what led Janie down a very different path from mine.

I envied her all through childhood. She had the new four-wheeler, the Nintendo, and a room full of anything she wanted on Christmas morning. I was lucky to get a puppy in a cardboard box.

"How are you going to do it?" she asked as we walked back to the

house. It was a ten-minute walk, and we took our time. "You know it's not going to be easy."

"I know," I said. "I thought I'd hit him on the head with the shovel. Do you think that will work?" She probably sensed the uncertainty in my voice. She shrugged her shoulders.

"I'll hit him first, and then you can," I said. I had played it out in my mind many times.

My dad would be getting home from work soon, so we didn't have much time left. We resumed our digging, but our energy and the sun were fading. In the distance, I saw my dad's oldest sister, Aunt Myra, walking toward the house.

Aunt Myra checked on me frequently throughout the day when my dad worked. She made sure I was fed and stayed close to home. I could sometimes see her looking through the windows to make sure I was in the house. I knew she meant well, so her nosing around didn't bother me. When Dad had to work at 6:00 a.m., he would drive me across the street and put me in Aunt Myra's front bedroom. He didn't like for me to be home alone so early in the morning.

She didn't trust me as much when I was with Janie for some reason. "What you two doing?" Aunt Myra asked. Her bonnet covered her grayish hair, but age had left a lasting impression on her face. Her fists stayed balled tightly, and the sound of her voice was chilling.

She was quite a bit older than my dad. I never understood how those two could be related. Aunt Myra was loud and mostly spoke negatively about life. My dad was just the opposite. He never met someone he didn't like and called everybody by the same name, Friend.

"We're just digging a hole," I said. My tennis shoes slid nervously back and forth next to the three-foot deep hole. I could see by the look on her face that she didn't approve.

"You two making a big mess for someone to clean up. That's what it looks like to me." She shook her head at us and started walking back toward her house. "If you want something to eat, you and your daddy can come get you some tomatoes and rice after while."

Janie and I started to laugh. "I don't know if we're going to make it," Janie said to me. "My arms are tired." She leaned on the shovel and looked at me for direction.

"I can't leave the hole here," I said. "What will I tell Dad we're doing?"

Janie thought about it for a minute. "You can tell him we found a dead animal to bury. He'll believe that. Remember when you wanted to bury

the dead bird you found?" Thinking she had solved my problem, she smiled a satisfied smile.

In just that moment, I saw my dad's white pick-up truck coming down the road. Janie and I quickly started looking for something to cover the hole. I saw the garden tub across the yard. "This will work," I shouted. "Help me move it!"

Janie and I used all our strength to move the tub over the hole. "Can you still see it?" I asked.

Janie stepped back and shook her head. "No, not really." I was relieved.

I saw dad drive up to the mailbox at the end of the path. "Hi," I shouted and waved. His straw hat covered his forehead, but I saw his sad-looking eyes peeking underneath the brim. He rolled the window down and stuck his hand out to wave back.

"What are you girls up to?" he asked. Carrying his lunch box and the mail underneath his left arm, he reached out with his tender, right hand to pat me on the back. His stride was heavy. Dad was a short, clean-cut man, and he dressed neatly for his job at the hardware store.

It was not his dream job. He had been a successful draftsman at one point in his life, but the computer replaced him and put him out of a job. That was probably the turning point for us.

"We went down to the pond and caught some tadpoles," I said as I presented him with the jars full of dirty, pond water. He didn't notice the garden tub had a new home in the yard.

Since it was late, Janie called her mom to come pick her up. We decided to finish the job the next morning after Dad went to work.

That night Dad and I ate over at Aunt Myra's house, but I couldn't eat much. All I could think about was the hole. We were so close. After Dad went to sleep, I quietly opened the front door to the trailer.

Summer nights were breezy and beautiful out in the country. The moon was especially bright that night. The cow manure smell was even gone. The house in the backdrop looked complete in the dark, almost majestic. Typically, I would have been afraid to be outside alone so late at night. But that night I wasn't. I felt invincible. I stood there with my flashlight in one hand and a shovel in the other.

The garden tub took some time to move by myself, but I finally did it. I started digging.

I thought about my mom and my dad. I thought about my new school, my new friends, and my new life. I thought about my mom's new apartment and her new attitude. And I thought about how much I hated all the new. I liked where I was and the friends I had before just fine.

Exhausted from the digging, I sat down on the edge of the tub and looked at the hole. It was deep enough for me to step inside and be mostly covered. But, I didn't see any sign of hell. I didn't see the fire I had heard about every Sunday in church. I didn't see the stolen souls. I didn't see any sinners. I saw no devil. Just dirt.

The next morning Dad picked me up out of bed at 5:30 a.m. and put me in his truck. He tucked me safe and sound in Aunt Myra's bed underneath the quilt and beside the Raggedy Ann doll she would leave on the bed just for me.

I walked back to Dad's later that morning to fill the hole with all the dirt I had taken out. I even managed to move the garden tub back where it belonged, underneath the oak tree. It stayed there for years waiting, like everything else there, to be fixed.

Transformation

If I were the moon, I'd pull you to me,
I would not be on that shore, helpless,
separated from you by waves and tides.
I would be beyond the ether:
the sphere of air and wind and words.
If I were the moon, I'd pull you to me
with every fiber of my consuming gravity.
Waves would be the least of your worries.
I would lift you, salt drying to your skin,
as you raise in altitude and oxygen thins.
There is no need to breathe or speak,
only to be, to nestle in my safe craters,
rest in my place of light and dark and silence.
Experience sharp cold nights, burning bright days,
feel with intensity not bound by vocabulary.
If I were a barren paradise, I'd pull you to me,
who you are would not be what you are not.
No more treading water or stinging eyes,
looking on linear horizons in hopes of rescue.
You would leap in arcs and fly, kicking up my dust
leaving it lay, because that's where it belongs.
If I were the moon, you would live in me –
mother and daughter, we could be one,
like we were from the start. You would
walk the bottoms of my dried-up seas,
trapped by neither water nor sand.
We are both outside as you drown and I cry,
but if I were the moon, I'd pull you to me.
You'd be the one the Earth could not keep
and we would altogether be outside everything.
I would gladly orbit in breathless silence
to be your shelter, and you be my mother,
to feel you and be felt in wordless experience.

Stranded

Arms strengthened by the weight of babies,
feet kicking with the stamina of a lifetime of days.
Mothers tread the surface. Their crow-footed
eyes burning from salt water, straining to see
the small letters of their daughters' poetic lines,
marks on the page, ink on paper.
The gales bluster their water-logged ears,
silencing the cries from shore. The water's
clipping peaks force lullaby lips to gurgle –
their salt-stale breath and thirsty tongues
hardly felt as eyes lock on fading figures,
daughters Marooned on the shore.

Wind spits sand on the tear-streaked cheeks
of helpless daughters. Grown women, calling
out for their stranded mothers, their feet gently
tangled in tattered ropes and nets,
holding signs high to be seen from the sea.
The daughters reason with the deep,
begging it to split and let their mothers free
to walk its murky bottom to their open arms,
whispers of defiance, to the shores of their pages.
Yet, Exodus discounted and lacking a staff,
the waters refuse submission.

Mocked by the slapping tide at their ankles –
the sun lying behind their mothers
as watery silhouettes disappear into black.
The daughters rest on large driftwood, raise
their eyes to the orb of light in the darkness
and muse of rescuing their mothers:

*If we could persuade the moon,
we'd need no line to pull them in.
We would forsake man-made vessels.*

*For the moon, she would author the current,
draw our mothers to our vivid diction,
like they drew us to the breast.*

Daughters fail as fishers of their mothers.
Nets too torn and lines too short to pull anything
out of water, to let their mothers breathe their weak
liberty in language. No sign, no plea can force
obedience from the sea or keen ears by the moon.
So they sit, wait, watch, feet dug into sand,
and each dreams of freedom from their stranded lot,
hoping for more than triumph or rescue, hoping
for transformation as they gaze at the moon.

Woman

I place my hands on my sides
and slide them down.

I feel the curves of my body
and remember the paintings I've seen
of women freed through artists' renderings.

I remember the honesty of
charcoal pastel smears,
a colored spectrum
tracing her body's gentle contour,
highlighting every curve.

I remember the dignity of watercolor,
brush strokes across canvas,
with kind hues
that saturate her limbs,
telling her story through paint.

I see the liberty of
pencil sketches on a page,
the lining and shading
of a natural being,
an organic beauty.

I place my hands on my sides
and slide them down.

I feel the curves of my body
and remember my own skin,
the skin of a woman.

Fire

We knew Dream Baby was trouble the day she came flying off the horse trailer, took out a fence, then shredded her new stall, all in two hours, forty-three minutes, and a few seconds. She was as arrogant as a stud and twice the trouble; her viciousness was unparalleled in any creature I've ever seen.

The trailer was a two-horse, painted white with "Dragon's Run Equestrian Center" emblazoned in black on both sides. We could hear bangs echoing out of the metal cube before the trailer even turned into the driveway. The driver, hands clenched tight, lips smooshed into a white line, looked traumatized.

Emily, her new owner, waited with her father, fidgeting. She was slim, small really, but muscled like a serious rider, with defined calves and hard thighs, though she certainly did not carry herself in the curve-legged stance of an old Olympic champion. She kept her hair shoulder-length, short enough to pile the red-blonde corona under her helmet. Her father frowned imperiously at the rocking trailer.

"I sincerely hope that animal isn't damaged."

The driver snorted. "After what I been through, I don' care." He turned to Ms. McCarty, the trainer at the property and the current renter. "You got a place for her?"

Keeping up the property and doing various repair work was part of my job, which also included grooming horses and baby-sitting rich brats, a poor substitute for the caliber of riding I had been used to. Once Dream Baby had been bought and the papers signed, I had prepared the stall myself to the exact specifications of my betters: six inches of pine shavings, after I sanded the walls to get rid of splinters. The new horse even got new floor mats. Her brand new nameplate gleamed brightly. Yes, we had prepared a place for her.

A shrill whinny echoed out of the trailer. For once, Ms. McCarty didn't seem totally confident. Due to Dream Baby's size and apparent ferocity, Ms. McCarty had me go in through the side door to take her head. When I reached in my hand toward the halter, she snapped her teeth at me in a snake-strike dart. Having dealt with some pretty nasty ones in my near thirty years, I wasn't bothered. It doesn't hurt when they miss whatever they're aiming for.

My first good glimpse of her color came when the driver unlatched the back ramp and lowered it to the ground. Dream Baby was pushing her tail hard against the butt bar, the sun glinting off a reddish-gold early-summer coat. Once the butt bar was let down, she shot out of the trailer fast enough to jerk me after her, stumbling.

The sun played across her body in molten gold ripples as she dragged me halfway down the asphalt driveway. When I finally got the leverage to stop her, it was only the stud chain looped under her chin that allowed me to impel her into barn one and her waiting stall.

"Are you sure you can handle this horse?" Ms. McCarty's question was directed at Emily, but her father answered.

"No one reaches the top levels of eventing on a push-button horse. If your staff can't handle the mare, we will take her elsewhere."

The one staff member, me, had just handled her without suffering any injury besides rope burn in my palms, so Ms. McCarty backed down. Dream Baby was here to stay.

After that first day, Emily never showed any signs of nervousness. She was delighted with her stunning new show horse, a difficult one that would show off her skills to perfection. She would turn this failed ex-racer into a A-show champion, would dominate the hunter ring, stadium jumping, dressage ring, and cross country. She was dead wrong.

Every day that summer, she would come out to fight that horse. Not once did Emily herself groom her, tack her up with whichever saddle and bridle fit the day's focus. I would tie the horse to the bars of her stall while I got her ready, with the ever present stud chain reminding her with every jerk on her lead rope that she was more or less stuck. Eventually she and I came to an understanding that if she didn't bite me, I wouldn't yank on the chain. Once she was tacked up, two of us, me and one of the older girls, would drag her up to the ring. It took three of us to hold her still for Emily to get on, at which point the battle began. I always stayed up there to make sure nothing fatal happened. Once Emily was unable to stay upright any longer, I took the horse back down to the barn, with Emily barely able to walk straight and Dream Baby prancing along as if nothing had happened. Day after day after day, she and I dealt with Dream Baby, and no progress was made. Amongst themselves, behind Emily's back, everyone out there but Emily called her devil-horse, and when they said it, the horse would eye them, knowing they were talking about her. But Emily loved her, loved how the younger girls, then the middle-schoolers, then the high school girls, finally the college girls hero-worshipped her, the seventeen-year-old who could ride the devil-horse.

Due to her temper, we pastured Dream Baby alone, during the day, when all the other horses were in their stalls trying to stay cool. Her pasture, paddock really, since it was so small, was by the gate. A deep summer drought had burned the grass to a crispy, dusty-colored brown. She spent her days playing, dancing like a wildfire on the dry grass. When people drove by, they slowed their cars to watch her, to be mesmerized, and the riders grazed their horses by her paddock, wandered over there when they had a moment to spare. Even I, who had worked with top-notch creatures since I was sixteen, was always amazed by her. What was it about her? The Arab delicacy in her face that contradicted her thoroughbred bloodlines? The brilliant coloring that burned like a fire in your peripheral vision? The dark gleam in her eyes, the eyes that watched everything? And she saw everything, knew every weakness of every person who worked with her, like some kind of spirit waiting for the right moment to tempt. Devil-horse they called her, but even so, we wouldn't have had her leave for all the blue ribbons in the world.

That summer was hotter than hell, bleaching the horses' coats, burning their riders' skin. Ms. McCarty kept a 50 spf sunscreen bottle out there and required everyone but me to slather it on. Even I, who just worked and never rode in the exposed arena, and consequently was neither required nor encouraged to use the sunscreen, could barely deal with the heat. And shady though it was, the covered arena couldn't shield them from humidity. Shak, one of the older ponies, died from heat exhaustion. The little girl who rode him, Caitlyn, was heartbroken and quit. Emily blistered the day she forgot sunscreen and spent extra time out in the heat. The dog plunked himself down in the air-conditioned office and refused to leave.

Only Dream Baby was unaffected. Every day she played, shunning her run-in, reveling in the burning sun that burnished her coat to a metallic, flickery-flame copper. When every other creature on earth was forced to flee the heat, she gloried in it.

Fall finally came and brought relief with it. Horses perked up, riders returned, and the flurry of preparation for fall's first show began.

Three days before the show, Emily came out, as she had every day of the summer to fight her horse, only this time her parents accompanied her. The girls whispered amongst themselves about the designer clothes and phenomenally expensive purse. I noted the gleaming Jag they parked in the driveway. Her father had driven a Ferrari when he came out to oversee Dream Baby's arrival some three months ago.

Emily was avoiding her parents by watching me get her horse ready. For once, she was nervous. So nervous.

"Your parents come to watch you?" Obviously, since there wasn't anything else to do out here, but she flinched when I asked.

"Yeah. My mom can't come to the show on Sunday, but she wanted to see Dream Baby and I 'in performance mode.' My dad wants to know if we're ready to compete."

They weren't. I had shown at nearly every level of eventing, even getting as far as Badminton before I busted my shoulder and lost the sponsors necessary to pay for everything. Push-button horses don't take you to the top, but neither do psychotic demons either. No matter how beautiful the animal, if you can't control it, you're dead last.

Her parents watched every second of her practice that day. Her mother looked worried, but her father was completely emotionless. In the dressage portion of practice, she forgot her routine, then failed to bring Dream Baby back down from a canter to a trot. Her show jumping fell completely apart, with a refusal at every jump, followed by knocking the poles down with a clatter. She even broke some of the jump standards holding up the poles. After the worse than usual ride, which ended early upon Dream Baby busting her third standard, her father frowned.

"I hope my purchase wasn't a waste, Emily. I'll expect you to demonstrate such at the show." Emily assured him that she would, that she would make them proud.

We all knew Emily shouldn't take Dream Baby, if for no other reason than that an uncontrollable horse in a ring-full is dangerous. But she was determined. So she went. All things considered, it went pretty well: nobody died. But no blue ribbons, although she did place sixth in a jumping class of twelve.

It wasn't enough though. Her mother wasn't there, but her father made his displeasure clear enough. He left without so much as a, "there's always the next show." Having shown in the intermediate-advanced classes immediately following the lunch break, Emily was done a good hour before the college girls showing at the highest level at that particular show. We left as soon as she and Dream Baby were done and I got the horse on the trailer. Emily was positively sizzling the whole way back to the barn. As the only person at the barn able to control Dream Baby alone, I drove Dream Baby's trailer, Emily riding shotgun. My comment of "good job for your first show together" just got a further stiffening of the shoulders. So the ride back was pretty quiet.

We got Dream Baby off the trailer without any more trouble than usual, but while I was wrestling her to a standstill, Emily got her tack out of the trailer.

"Umm, I could really use some help spraying her off."

"We're not done for the day. Hold her still."

"She needs a break, miss. So do you. Just let it go. You can come back out tomorrow and work out the problems."

But it was her horse, and since she had turned eighteen two days before, I had no authority to stop her. So I did my best to hold the horse. Dream Baby pinned her ears flat against her head when the saddle settled onto her back, but she couldn't do any more than pivot around me in a circle. She knew she'd worked enough for the day. Once the horse was tacked back up, Emily swung herself on after three tries and headed for the covered arena, between the outdoor arena and the two barns. I parked the trailer in its spot and unhitched. Emily made it into the arena without any more problems than usual, and she was still there three hours later when the other two trailers arrived with the college girls and their normal horses.

When Ms. McCarty got out of the truck with the four-horse, and I told her what Emily was up to, she muttered something I couldn't hear and started toward the ring. She hadn't gone more than ten feet when we heard Emily yell. She wasn't far, so we saw Dream Baby take the outer rail at a dead run, bit in her teeth. Dream Baby's form was flawless, the kind of scope that demolishes competitors in the ring. Emily was half off when Dream Baby lunged. It's a testament to her skills that she didn't come off until Dream Baby landed and bucked.

Emily was launched to the side, limbs spread like a starfish. She landed squarely on the lowest point of her back, spine curved forward, but the sheer force Dream Baby unleashed uncurled her, and the back of her head, helmeted, slammed into the ground and rebounded.

She might have been okay there with any other horse. Ms. McCarty was running for her, the barn dog and I running for the horse. But this was Dream Baby.

I've never seen anything so furious as the devil horse. She was still plunging around, but she knew where she was going and got to Emily before we did. She went after her feet first, with deadly accuracy in the general body area. When we reached the spot, Dream Baby smashed the dog in the ribs and threw him thirty feet before she went after me. I'd dealt with her alone before, every evening when I fed her and dragged her out to her pasture. When she drove at me the third time, I caught the left rein and used my full body weight as drag pressure on the bit, as in all her lunging around she'd let it settle back on the bars of her mouth.

She twisted up her mouth in a snarl around the pull and flattened

her ears even harder to her skull, eyes rolling in their sockets. Now she just wanted to get away. She bolted and dragged me off my feet. I let go and broke my wrist catching myself on the baked ground. But I had adrenaline rushing in me, so I scrambled back up, wrist held tight against my chest.

She tore up the gravel drive, setting off the horses being unloaded from the trailers. The stirrups slamming into her ribs drove her faster, faster, and she braked into a hard left to put herself into her paddock, another perfect jump. She slid into a stop on the hard ground, panting.

It took a few minutes to restore order on the drive, during which time Ms. McCarty talked quietly with Meghan's dad, who had driven the three-horse and come running to the still body sprawled on the ground. He was on his cell calling 911 in seconds, and Ms. McCarty went back to keeping Emily alive.

I was numb in the head, staring after the horse. One of the other parents, who had driven a carful of riders back from the show came up, and her question, what in the world had happened, shook me out of my daze. My whole body, and the instincts honed over the years, screamed to go to the horses and riders milling in confusion in the driveway, but the pull of the devil-horse was stronger. I was the only person brave enough, or maybe crazy enough, to try and get her tack off, especially now, with her still in a fury. But a loose horse with tack still on is a danger to itself, and I couldn't blame the horse for the rider's bull-headed determination to fix the problem now. They could handle the other horses without me. My arm burned, the broken edges searing the nerves, but it registered as if someone distant had told me what I was feeling. I crossed the drive in a dream and ducked under between the fence rails into Dream Baby's paddock.

She locked eyes with me, ears still back, but she was completely still. My good arm was strong enough to uncinch the girth, lift the saddle, even as I held the other tight at my heart. When I slid the bridle off, Dream Baby broke into a rocking canter, still so graceful, and abandoned me for the road side of the paddock. Even after all that, she hadn't broken a sweat.

The ambulance arrived quickly, the flaring lights and wail setting off the horses that hadn't gone crazy when Dream Baby exploded. They were all back in their stalls and paddocks by then, some running, some squealing and kicking in their stalls. Dream Baby was still, neck arched, watching, watching, always watching. My arm throbbed like a heartbeat, but I was still in a daze and hardly noticed the girls crying, the EMTs rushing efficiently about. When the ambulance doors slammed shut, I followed with my eyes as it eased over the gravel, then asked Meghan's dad to drive me to the Emergency Room.

The human skull is not made to withstand an iron-shod hoof, and Emily's surviving at all was a miracle. A coma is little better, though, when parents have expectations of greatness. Emily's parents came out to the barn a few weeks after the incident, and talk among the girls was that they would sell the horse that destroyed their daughter.

Both parents were pale, and the mother's eyes were bloodshot. The tension ran through them like an electric chair's current, and most of the girls kept their distance.

"Where is your trainer?" The father's voice was utterly calm and smooth, as always. I sent one of the girls to the ring at a run to get her. I would have gone myself, but running with a cast on your arm isn't typically considered wise. Granted, neither was being out there, but I wasn't missing my pay for that, not when I had one good arm.

When Ms. McCarty arrived, I could have attributed the sweat to the heat, but her frame sagged visibly when she saw Emily's parents. They had the wealth and influence in the community to destroy Ms. McCarty's reputation and ruin her barn. And if she lost her business, I would lose my job. People rarely rush to hire a failed professional rider with a ruined career and not enough of a reputation for people to want his training. Ms. McCarty had done it as a favor to my trainer.

Emily's father stepped forward, jaw tightening. "I have purchased this property. I want your establishment off by the time your lease runs out."

Ms. McCarty sagged further. She had two months. A couple of the high school girls who'd been eavesdropping gasped. My heart paused mid-beat before the father turned to me. "You may stay on to care for Dream Baby, and I will double your pay. I will, however, expect you to live on the property so as to provide the best care possible."

From \$7.25 an hour for nine hours a day, to \$14.50 an hour for however many hours I was on the property. Even if I only added sleeping time and still took classes at Forsyth Tech, I could "work" fifteen hours a day. I blinked at him once and opened my mouth to say thanks, but the mother exploded. "'Best care possible?!" You ought to have that animal made into dogfood. And that idiot let my baby get on without supervision. You ought to—"

"We discussed this already, Joanna." For the first time there was an edge in his voice, a visible darkening of expression. "They leave. The horse and groom stay." He spun away and walked with stiff strides back to the red Jag. His wife had no real choice but to follow.

The day the last of the school horses left, I moved Dream Baby into one of the big pastures that lay out of sight, behind the paddocks, behind the old, wood barn. When my arm was healed, I knocked down the fence separating it from the neighboring pasture, then connected it to a third, so she had the run of probably a quarter of the property. In the old barn, I put two of the bigger stalls together to create an even larger one. The extra room made her harder to catch, but she seemed happier that way, alone, with plenty of space to run and move.

I moved into what had once been Ms. McCarty's office. An old camping mat and sleeping bag were enough for me, and the wash pit was a fine shower. We lived like royalty in our own little world, the only interruption being the feed delivery every two weeks and the farrier every three. Once the farrier, who loathed that horse, taught me how to do her feet myself, it was only the feed. I dropped out of classes at the community college, dropped out of life outside that horse. She consumed me.

My orders were to feed, to groom, and generally maintain the value of the horse and place. But I burned for more than that. I burned to feel that rush of muscle that only a thoroughbred can give, that surging crest that lingers over the jump before landing and surging forth again. I had felt it so many times, before a bad fall over a water jump destroyed my shoulder and my career. Since then, medical bills and attempts at getting some kind of education had run my savings account nearly dry. I couldn't afford to ride, so I worked to get my horse fix, poor shadow that it was. But here there was no one to refuse me. As fall and winter passed in a memory, Dream Baby grew calmer, almost affectionate at times. And it gave me courage, a boldness I never would have had in the outside world. And one day, at the very beginning of spring, I made the leap from the fence rail to Dream Baby's broad, muscled back.

Her head flew up from her feed, and she pranced in place. I stroked her mane, kneaded my knuckles into her withers, whispering nonsense, forcing the tension out of my body.

"Easy, mare. No need to go crazy on me."

She pranced for a moment, dancing in place like a foal, ignoring my whispers. She remembered the starting gates at Keeneland, and I remembered the start box at Badminton, the explosive power of lunging forward to begin, and my memory at least was accurate. But I'd never felt power like hers before.

The turf, spongy from spring rains, flew beneath us, and we left our shadows behind. The pasture had few trees, though it sloped a little, so there

was nothing to impede our flight. The perfect, pounding beat tattooed itself into my brain, even as I breathed in the moist air weaving through her mane. There is nothing like a thoroughbred running.

At the end of the pasture, she skidded to a stop, and I slid down her shoulder to land facing her. She ducked her head once, then flung herself away to run again, tail flagging behind her like a long flame. And I started the long walk back to the barn.

Every day we ran together, sometimes the length of the pasture, sometimes more. I cleaned her tack every once in a while, but only to keep it from mouldering, to keep it for Emily if she ever returned. Dream Baby and I ran with nothing between us, nothing to slow us down. After a while, we grew comfortable enough with each other to leave the pasture for the trails at the back of the property, cantering through the pines, then coming to cross country and flying over the jumps I had once known better than I knew my own family. And she never faltered, never shied, never threw me to the ground and set herself free.

The rains of spring couldn't slow us down, and in the heat of summer, she flared as strongly as a match to gasoline, her coat flashing copper. As the ground baked and cracked, we thrived, building muscle and endurance until we could run all morning. She grew to expect being sprayed off in the wash pit after our runs, almost to enjoy it, before taking an afternoon-long nap in her stall. She spent the nights in her pasture, and I strung up an old hammock I got with my pay between two of the few trees in her pasture. I fell asleep each night listening to her, her feet on the ground, her breath snuffling in the drying grass or in the hay I gave her every morning and evening.

We were fairly isolated there. I left once a week for an hour to get food for myself, but no one really came on the property. There was a family that drove by like clockwork every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening, and they always slowed down, looking for horses perhaps. Once, I put Dream Baby in paddock C, by the road, to feed her because the night was warm and I intended to give her a good bath, but didn't want to have to chase her around the pasture to catch her. She was always impatient for her dinner, and she demanded her food by digging at the ground with her right foreleg, banging on the fence. As soon as I slung the food into the feeder, she'd stop and shove her nose into the wetness of sweetfeed and corn oil. Before the accident, she would always guard her feed religiously, refusing to leave it, unless a car drove by. Then she'd take off, tearing across the paddock like

a tornado, showing off. And when she got to the road side, she came flying back, always skidding to a stop with her chest touching the fence.

That particular family used to stop and watch her when they drove by. Their little girl would smash her nose against the window, point, and jabber, probably about the "pretty horsey!" By her reaction this particular evening, I figured she had been disappointed when Dream Baby disappeared. Instead of just driving by, they came up the driveway in their shiny silver Benz and stopped. The mother rolled down her window.

"Excuse me!" She clearly expected me to walk over, and the old habits of a no-account groom die hard in the presence of the rich who dictate their every move. When I was closer, "How much for that horse?"

"She's not for sale, ma'am. Owners won't sell." Which was technically true, since the father was on the registration papers, not the mother.

Both parents frowned and had a low discussion with the little girl's lip quivering behind them. The mother turned back to me and held out a business card. "Tell them to give us a call. I'm sure we can negotiate."

I took the card, and they backed out, the girl finally letting loose a wail of disappointment that she couldn't have the pretty horsey "now!" When they were out of sight, I tore the card to pieces and threw them in the trash. I never put her in a paddock after that. Better if she disappeared from view completely. She was too precious to me, and I would not lose the only thing I had to people who had everything.

Summer ended; the leaves changed from dull green to fiery reds and orange, then fell. The temperature dropped, and I started putting a blanket on Dream Baby when she went outside, though she didn't quite need it in the barn. Our rides and runs became less frequent, and both of us moved more slowly. Don't get me wrong, she still had energy, but it faded, even as her coat mellowed from copper to barely gilded chestnut. Our routine flipped, and she spent her days in the pasture and her nights inside.

On December 27th, Emily's father came out to the property. He still walked with the authority I remembered, but it was brittle, transparent as glass. I was in the stable, cleaning out Dream Baby's stall. It was snowing lightly, only a few flakes, all of them melting when they hit the ground, but it was the first time it had snowed at all while she was on the property, and she refused to set foot outside the barn, so she was in the stall with me. I only knew he came in because she pricked her ears at him and stared.

He stared back at her, with an almost confused expression, like someone who thinks he might be lost but isn't sure.

"Can I help you, sir?"

My voice seemed to startle him, and he shook his head. "No, I— I just needed to see how things were with the horse. She is a valuable animal, you know."

Yes, I knew.

For me, at least, his presence was awkward, and the silence, so different from the silence that normally permeated the property, made me restless. "How's your daughter, sir?"

His eyes were empty of anything, lost. If the circles under them were any indication, he wasn't taking care of himself. He shuddered once, then finally turned to me. "Dead. She died on Christmas Day." She had lasted over a year then. He turned back to Dream Baby, who continued to stare at him with great interest. "My wife wants us to sell the horse, or better have it euthanized so it cannot hurt anyone else. But something in me refuses to let her go." He raised his hand as if to touch Dream Baby through the bars on her stall but stopped before his hand was even fully outstretched. Dream Baby flattened her ears to her skull and snapped at the bars. He withdrew his hand and left.

Dream Baby continued to glare after him as I stroked the crest of her neck. I was trembling. For the next few days, I went about our routine restless and uneasy. In the end, my uncertainty crystallized into conviction. Emily's father had always so clearly dominated his family. Last time his wife had objected to keeping Dream Baby, he had shut her up in three short sentences. He would win this time too.

On December 31st, I woke to heat and sweat. The clock on the wall read 1:32 a.m. I staggered upright, half-asleep, a strange crackling, popping noise echoing through my ears. When I opened the door of the office, a blast of heat curled my eyelashes, and red light threw everything into a haze. My first instinct, to get Dream Baby out, wrenched me free from sleep and sent me into the aisle of the barn. I knew it by heart and made my way toward her stall. Very little frightened that horse, but a horse's most terrifying enemy is fire. She threw herself into the walls in a frenzy.

I reached for the bolt on the door, but it was red-hot and crisped the skin on my fingertips. I tried again and again, with and without gloves, my eyes never leaving her, but the bolt burned through the gloves at first touch.

Her coat burned with light, reflecting metallically under my gaze. Her mane fell with the crest of her neck, whipping wildly as she threw her head. The stockings on her forelegs were blindingly white against the brown

of the wooden stall and flashed with the colors of the fire. She danced in the burning shavings, stirring them with dark hooves, glossy gray with hoof polish. Her legs were slender, and the curve of the joints moved more smoothly than a summer breeze. Her confirmation there was flawless, and she'd never suffered injury. Legs like that can take the impact of an oxer landing, the relentless pounding of a race track, and stay perfect, so long as they are cared for.

A vise clamped down on my shoulder and spun me away from the stall- a fireman from the station four minutes down the road. I fought him like a demon as he dragged me away, but his suit protected him from my frenzy. When we stepped out from the inferno, the fire consuming my t-shirt and jeans was doused. The trucks were spraying water onto and around the barn in an effort to keep it from spreading. The barn itself was engulfed. A horse's shriek ripped through the flames and renewed my frenzied attempts at going back. I managed to tear free and flew toward the entrance, but the fire was destroying the frame of the barn. The beam braced over the entrance fell, followed by several others, in a shower of bright sparks. I threw my hands over my face, staggered back, and fell. My head hit the ground hard, and I blacked out.

I woke up in the hospital New Year's morning, badly burned and still drugged up on morphine. Outside, it was snowing hard, and I knew, vaguely, that the property would be covered in pristine white, broken only by the marks of firemen and investigators. An investigator came to me in hopes of some clue to what had happened, but it really wasn't necessary. A few days after the fire, Emily's mother went to the police and confessed. She had doused everything she could in Kingsford lighter fluid and lit a single match. That was enough. She set the fire at 1:19 a.m., and in thirteen minutes, the whole barn was burning. She had called the fire department herself when she was sure that they wouldn't be able to save it.

When I was released from the hospital, the first thing I did was go out to the property. Emily's father had finally sold it, and in that short time, a new barn had moved in. The people, the horses, were strange to me. The new trainer was clearly suspicious of me, so I didn't stay long. The old wooden barn was not rebuilt. Every time I turned in its direction, I could see it, if only for a second. Every time I turned to the redivided pasture, I saw her.

The heat of the fire amazed the investigators. It had burned the old barn to a black square of ash before the firemen's hoses and the falling snow put it out. They never found Dream Baby's body.

In my dreams, we run from the inferno, racing the long, flickering shadows cast by the flames. The dream always ends with a horse's shriek ripping the air, more powerful than any human cry. It is the shrill fear, the wailing desperation, the stark fury of hell, and it echoes in my dreams by day and night.

KATHY ACKERMAN

Belladonna's Designer Wigs, Etc.

Disease is redundant as Nightshade
in Bunny's store; she's the proprietor
of etcetera:
mastectomy bras,
prosthetics,
wigs for irradiated brains.

Has Bunny seen
O'Keefe's Bella Donna,
billowing white petals pierced
black where the pistil should be
as if burned by the cigarette of cancer?

The faces on all the mannequin heads
wear the same expression,
unselfconscious
impeccably styled and overpriced.
Calligraphied signs beg us not to touch.

Her own hair seems to be her own.
Is it newly grown? Is it empathy
that leads one to this work?

I pretend my mother and I
shop for cruise attire. I pretend
there is beauty and convenience here,
that the hole where the tumor was removed
is shaped by petals soft as air.

Bunny explains we must not comb,
"merely lift and move the hairs;
Swirl it. Swirl. Make little C's."
Never blow it dry. Never heat to curl.
It will melt, she says.
Don't lean to open an oven door.

"When you wash it imagine
a delicate sweater,"
though this one we'll hang
on a head-shaped wire rack.

Nothing you can do
can change its shape.

Campfire

She ran her fingers over
discolored imperfections on her forearms
before pulling down her sleeves to hide
the scars of a clumsy childhood.

She didn't remember
tripping over the pesky shoelace,
the metal safety rim bruising her leg.
But all too well she remembered
failing to choke back the tears
as smoldering coals gripped her forearms,

the firm grasp on the back of her shirt,
her rescuer, her mother,
dragging her to the a perfectly-placed water pump,
as if it had been awaiting her misfortune.

She remembered the
pain as her skin burned,
embarrassment of her own misstep,
fear and unknown in the Emergency Room
the doctor poking incessantly asking if she felt it.
Yes. It hurt.

She remembered the rules
no pool, no sun.
A bird was told not to fly.
She tried to argue but
her voice had vanished,
the verdict not negotiable.

She remembered
devastation,
summer lasting an eternity

bandages over both arms,
trying in vain to dry one hand,
always refusing to explain why.

Years later the bandages are gone,
but the scars remain like
she tanned while wearing fishnets,
even if only for her to see
and still she avoids explaining.

SUSAN AYLWORTH

Phantoms

So calm, your leaving yesterday –
Clinical, really. Detached. Staid.
Each item in its scheduled place,
Checked off from the list you made.
Each piece of mail or pending bill
All neatly filed and put away.
No article or blame mislaid,
No ceremony marked the day.

This afternoon I started, half-afraid,
When I heard your footfall ringing in the hall.
Of course I faced an empty wall
Where shadows played on memory's scrim --
Echoes of the words we said,
Imprints of the hopes we prayed,
Flashes slowly growing dim --
Spectral, ghostly, unallayed,
Like the ache in a missing limb.

Gristle on the Bone

I bathed my scabrous molt
in the lava of the lamb.
I shaped petals into a medal.
I split my side wide open,
put back against the windlass,
blew a gasket and unspoiled.
I remembered where I hid my ducats
as the ferry left the mainland.
I chased my byline down the shoreline.
I no longer screwed the hooch,
dropped anchor, moored ports.
I stared into a maw of lowered eyes,
hacked off my swollen tongue,
swallowed and talked to myself.
I shot broadsides cross a bow,
blew the scurvy dog down
and went on me merry way.

In the Dust of Fall

It is fall in the pinewoods,
I come in search of you
after fifteen years.
There is the echo of chopping
wood through the forest.
Puffs of smoke above every house.
Crows and hawks still battle
for the highest sky.
The village has not changed much.
The same carp are still feeding
off the surface of the lake.
Boys are still throwing stones
at each other and passers-by.
Girls are still playing
hopscotch in the dust.
I search for you a long time,
old friend, at the bottom
of the valley where the river
is still flowing into Lake Ponchartrain.
I find you in your houseboat
stretched out and much older.
You do not recognize me,
dressed in black and my face as white
as suburbia.
When you finally remember, you weep
into your hands.
A long silence takes over us
and I consider that old friends
should not meet again.
Things and people
make us sad when so
much time has deformed us
and made us weak,
while the river continues
to flow
and the sky is blue
even though we are dying.

BILL BROWN

A House

Nothing left of that house but memory anyway.

—Mark Doty

He's driven past it many times in 40 years—
painted peach one year, antique white a decade later,
same Victorian three-story, new black trim
and porch with rockers. Maples and elms
still shade the driveway. He doesn't know

if day lilies divide the back yard above the creek,
if other boys' play has storied the shadows
with different wars, how adult cares shape make-believe—
games of fallout shelter in the basement.
Because he thought all families ate white beans

on Saturdays, the soggy ham hock stripped
of meat and saved for his father, because his world
was filled with snakes, frogs and rolly-polies
instead of Television, he didn't know that while
he slept his parents sat at the kitchen table

staring at a check book that never balanced.
Whose sister read in silence at her bedroom window?
Whose brother fed a pet crow until a hateful
neighbor poisoned it? Which child fell asleep
on the top step, waiting, waiting?

Now shadows of strangers stain curtains.
Oh, The Places You'll Go, he reads to his grandson.
Who owns a house anyway, after the walls collapse,
the plaster worn into the earth, nothing but
a stone foundation nestled in the grass?

The Boy and the Poem

Like memory left by a dream
in the mind of a boy, the poem begins.
He shares it with his sister at breakfast,
their dead father by the Elk River.

Later, he tells a friend on the school bus,
finding a better beginning-- the campfire,
the green willows at first light.
A clear thread emerges, though

the ending still waits in a fog.
The dream sleeps beneath the surface
of his day, awakes in science class
when the teacher's waving arm

reminds the boy of his father's
fly rod whipping the bright air
to place the nymph by a log,
and the explosion as a rainbow

tail-walks, spits the fly
and disappears. Nothing is
finished, not just yet— there is
no consolation until the boy

remembers his father's eyes.
The dream, like the poem,
resurrects the dead,
lives best in the telling.

BILL BROWN

Late Night, Early Morning

Through the open window,
I hear the rain begin, feel
myself smile in the dark.

Late summer draught has
grass burnt brown,
deer sleeping near the river,

and woodpeckers drinking
hummingbird water.
We embrace often,

not just desire, but from
a need to touch—
hold on

something says—hold on
to thwart emptiness
caverned by a need for change.

Now large yellow daises
will line the creek;
ironweed will bloom purple

above the fence
to close the season.
Spirits lift when color

anooints the landscape.
Autumn seeks a different numbing—
some pull in the body needs it,

a resignation that resembles hope,
when new words form a syntax
that welcomes mornings first chill.

CAROL CARPENTER

Uptown Jazz

The jazzman's fingers skitter over the naturals, jounce off sharps and flats. He plays in that place where no one can live for long, where the first star's bright wish light sucks him up, up where storms brew inside white clouds, where lightning licks the licorice sky before his rhythm rattles hickory roots, grumbles, tumbles into the heartwood, slides under the ebony and ivory.

Musical notes rumble in the jazzman's belly, primitive sounds he can't write down, won't remember tomorrow. His throat grunts with each chord, each key his fingers stroke, his song from the start. Only him and wind and fire and water and dirt.

Occult Bat Encounters

They're the meetings you don't know you've had,
maybe dreaming, one way or another:
with silent furred families laired in your roofbeams,
a caught bat wheeling through sleeping rooms.
You may see a barbed shadow flitter and dip,
but if it bit you, you won't know
till too late, the skinprick so delicate
no marks bleed or show.

And you are the encounters I never had
except half-asleep, the bites that came
to madness, or to nothing at all.
You, and you, and you—
occult meeting, mammal to mammal,
black as a cauldron,
secret as vodoun,
deep as a vault, obscure as guilt.

The Great Eddy

Here where two boulders trap
a great log in their gap,
here where the river turns
to take the sweeping bend,
here where the eddy curls
back in upon itself
in a whorl an acre wide:
this is the place you'll find
all that you've tried to lose,
the never-dead. There's vinyl
swollen with silky mud,
vainly eternal where
even steel turns frail;
trees sawn to beams
and cured in arsenic, now
dissolving in the stream;
a vintage Chevy, sunk
down to the roofline chrome
and jutting tail fins
that were some young man's pride.
The needles, condoms, combs
and razors are the usual
suspects, predictable
enough, but then there are
drowned kittens, snarling white
lips shrunk from milk-teeth;
tuna steaks vacuum-packed
in solid plastic sheets,
sealed in airless rot;
everted tennis balls
like ruptured testicles;
old droppings; and the whole
great float traversed by spiders—
big as your palm, old

as grandmothers, swift
as swallows. The broad
drift is thick, foul as the mind
in nightmare. In the hole
at the slack whirlpool's eye
lie Jimmy Hoffa's skull;
the last Roswell reports;
a passenger pigeon's corpse;
the water-blurry face
of the boy you loved
too long, and would again;
no doubt, some instruments
of mass destruction. Turn
in your raft, and look,
backing your paddle hard
against the current's boil;
take in the scope and scale
of upstream's slowly spinning
griefs, come home to you.

Dockerty's Daughter

Little Lucy Dockerty's veins had turned green before she disappeared. It could have been a major news story, a tabloid's delight at the least, but her father didn't seek fame, instead, burying the story as a matter of familial privacy. No photographs existed, no media quotes from the family. With so little tangible evidence, the story of the girl with green veins became a second hand story, subject to the interpretations of doctors who saw her, to the embellishment of nurses and neighbors.

The police questioned Galen Dockerty about his daughter's disappearance, even held him for a time. He was so calm about it, so accepting. How could a parent—even one whose daughter was, by all accounts deathly ill—accept that she was just gone? All the more so when the man was a widow, his only other family left an older daughter who left home long ago.

A decade later, Mr. Dockerty agreed to speak, selling the rights to his story to my magazine, where the girl with the green veins became my assignment.

So much of Dockerty's living room rests beneath a thin coat of dust. The room encases so many signs of another life, a moose head on the wall, a half-complete Lego house on the floor, a bookcase lined with a mix of classic literature, Betty Crocker's, and children's books.

We cross the hardwood floor and sit on opposite ends of a sofa across the way from a television. The TV measures about 30 inches, encased in the sort of old wooden console that came into style twenty years ago. The screen has an uneven cleanliness to it, the section without dust framed by the shape of fingertips, where Mr. Doughterty rubbed his hands.

"It all started with that TV," he says.

"With the TV?" I tilt my head, looking at it. "You're saying that the TV led to Lucy's condition?"

"My older daughter, Kate, always complained because we didn't have a big TV. So I went out and bought one the summer before she went to college. Guess I thought she'd visit me more to watch the TV." Dockerty runs a palm over his nostrils, and audibly sucks back mucus. "She hardly even watched the thing that summer. Got a boyfriend and I barely saw her. Never came back for more than a week after she left for school."

"But Lucy—she watched?" My thumb presses the pen against my writer's callous, poised to record every word once the story begins in earnest.

Dockerty laughs. His glasses bob with the unfamiliar motion. "Not Lucy. Typical kid stuff—less interested in the TV than the box it came in."

I share in his laugh, careful not to outlast him, not to seem unsympathetic.

"She would spend hours inside that box, with her crayons and stickers. You would think a kid would get bored with it after a couple days, but she just kept on with it."

A man loses his daughter at six years old. He's going to fixate, he's going to tell anecdotes. It's my job to get to the real story. Capture a little of the dressing to humanize story, but get to the meat as quickly as possible.

"Mr. Dockerty, if we could, for a moment, talk about your daughter's illness—"

"We're getting to it." He coughs. "I tried to throw the box out after a month. Just thought it was silly, and she ought to spend her time playing with all the things I'd bought her. Dolls and teddy bears." He nods to the half Lego house. "All those things. She got upset with me when I tried to chuck it, though. Came home from school and saw the box sitting out by the trash cans. Brought it right back inside.

"Things never go the way you plan. You get married and you have your vision of this family. The wife who'll be around to grow old with you. You think about having kids—maybe one boy, one girl—big brother to look after his little sister. Then, one day, you'll crack open a beer with him and teach him all the things you figure you'll know by then. You think you'll be together forever, think money won't ever matter as long as you've got each other."

"Things never go the way you plan," I repeat.

"Had two daughters. Loved them plenty, but never had that boy I could connect with the way I wanted to—girls will be girls, you know? Then my wife gets in a car accident. Went from two incomes to one. A part of what I hated about Kate leaving for school was that I'd be paying her tuition and paying someone to babysit Lucy until I got home from work. It's one of the pieces of fatherhood people don't talk about—the point when you start to see your children as financial burdens."

This is the first I've heard of a babysitter. "The babysitter—did she have something to do with Lucy getting sick?"

"How's that?"

"I mean, did she do something to her? Accidentally feed her some chemical or something?"

"The babysitter was a good kid. Just trying to save money so she

could get to college herself. Didn't really get Lucy, though. I don't think she was used to watching kids who were that bright. I remember she kept telling me they would play hide and seek, and it would take her forever to find Lucy—got her worried sometimes she had run off, or something had happened to her. But she always showed up again in the end.

"I thought the sitter was just slow, and I asked Lucy where she was hiding. She told me she had a secret."

"So she was running off?" I catch myself pressing the pen into the paper, hand almost shaking with the anticipation of a meaningful note. "I mean, she went somewhere and she came back?"

"Yes and no. See, Lucy told me about her time machine."

I lift the pen again. "Her time machine?"

"She told me she had made one, and when she was supposed to be hiding, she slipped off to visit other times. I asked her to show me this time machine of hers, and she pointed to that darned old cardboard box."

"So she was playing make believe?"

Dockerty moves each of his hands outward. "She would have to be, right? That's what I figured. I figured she hid in the box, and the sitter wasn't smart enough to look there. So I let it go at that."

I hold in a sigh. "So do you think there was something about the box that made her sick?"

"Will you quit trying to skip to the end and let me tell my story?"

"Of course, Mr. Dockerty. My apologies."

Dockerty crosses his legs. "I let it go at that, and didn't think about box or the tricks Lucy was playing. But then some strange things started to happen.

"I noticed things show up in her room. She was always a collector—sea shells when we went to the beach, pretty rocks, leaves, and so on and so forth. But stuff started showing up in her room that I couldn't explain."

"What sort of stuff?"

"All kinds. She had this bone—long as my forearm, thick as my thigh, and she swore it was a dinosaur bone. Then she had this scrap of some sort of metal she swore was from the future—about the size of a quarter, but must have weighed ten pounds.

"I know you're thinking this is all crazy, but then she comes up with a newspaper from the day after JFK got shot. I never thought to save stuff like that, and I just couldn't figure where she would have picked it up."

There's a certain grace with which you need to ask questions when you're starting to lose your subject's credibility. You want to steer him back

to reality, but don't want to risk damaging the rapport. "Do you think someone else could have given her the paper, or that she could have found it somewhere?"

"I thought all sorts of things. I'm no loony. I worried she was stealing from the library or something. But her story never changed. She swore up and down she was traveling in that time machine of hers, and she never went back on anything."

"And then she got sick."

"What happened?"

"She was coughing one night—out of nowhere, this loud, hacking cough. Loud enough to wake me up, so I went in her room. Found her fully dressed, standing next to that cardboard box, coughing away."

"I asked her why she was wearing her clothes and she said she had been out time traveling. I told her it was too late for games and put her back to bed. Went back to my own room and didn't wake up again until I heard her throwing up in the bathroom." He looks me in the eye again, and somehow looks older at that turn of the story. "Her throw up was all green."

"If she'd eaten—"

"It wasn't something she ate," he says. "For a second, I could have sworn her skin took this green hue. When I blinked she was back to normal."

"She didn't go to school the next day or the day after that. Got to where she couldn't climb out of bed, and I would carry her to the bathroom. The cough got worse and she started coughing up blood. Green blood."

"You're certain it wasn't mucus?"

He nods. "It was blood." He goes on to describe bringing her to the hospital. The doctors didn't know what to make of her. His elder daughter came to relieve him, made him go to sleep, reassured him she would be there if Lucy woke up. Lucy looked greener and greener, most of all her veins.

"She had trouble speaking by that point, so I went to the hospital gift shop and got her a little notepad. The pad was heart-shaped, it was supposed to be for thank you notes. She wrote on it, and she asked me to bring her her time machine.

"So I did it. What else was I supposed to do? Be the old bastard who wouldn't bring his daughter her favorite plaything on her deathbed? Worry about looking foolish for carrying a giant box through the hospital, all covered in crayon and stickers? I had to do it." He testifies, pleads his case to a jury of no one.

"So I bring her the box," he says, "and she opens up her mouth to

speak. It's this gravelly croak that's worse than her not speaking at all, like my little girl's become some sort of animal. And she says, 'Daddy, help me get in the box.'"

"I told her I couldn't—that all those tubes and wires going into her were keeping her alive. And she told me she would die if I kept her there—actually said those words, 'I'm going to die.' Then she coughed too much to go on, so she picked up that notepad. Coughed and shook so much she could barely get the words out so they were legible.

"She wrote all these things. Said whatever she was sick with, she caught it in the future, in 2150, and the doctors weren't going to know how to deal with it in the present. Said she needed to go about 200 years in the future, when there would be a cure.

"I started to play along—started writing back, even though I could talk. It was like we were talking in our own language on that paper—my penmanship had gone to crap, and her convulsing the way she was. I wrote to her, why not go a thousand years, when what you've got will be like a common cold.

"She wrote if she went that far, people would already be immune, and it would be a forgotten disease. Two hundred years was long enough they'd probably have a cure, but the disease would still be current. They wouldn't have forgotten what to do with it."

"That's smart of her," I say.

"Smart kid. Smart enough to make a time machine." He laughs, deep belly laughs, and he covers his face in his hands, so in a minute I don't know if he's laughing or crying. All at once, his hands come back down and it's neither. "I unhooked her. I figured, what have we got to lose? The doctors didn't know what to do, and she wasn't getting any better. Why not let her play, let her enjoy her time. And, hell, maybe there is something about that box.

"I knew I was making a mistake as soon as I had the first two cords unhooked from her. I knew I'd never figure out how to put it all back together again, and she would probably be worse off for me trying. Stupid as it was, there was no point turning back.

"She crawled out of bed, and sort of staggered for a step before she dropped down to all fours and crawled.

"She crawled to the box and set it on its side. She sat down next to it, hugging her legs in tight with one arm and started to tip the opening of the box on herself.

"I told her to be careful" He reaches out a hand as if he's talking to

her again, trying to touch his daughter. "Silliest thing, she probably put that box over herself a hundred times already, and there I was, acting like I knew better." He shakes his head at himself. "And that's the last time I saw her."

"That's the last time you saw her?"

"Waited 30 seconds or so, then picked up the box. Figured she had had her play time, and I'd get her back to bed, get one of the nurses to hook her back up to her machines. But she was gone."

My skin grows warm. I think of the hours of driving to get to this little town. The time I invested, just sitting in that room, talking with him. And all of that for lies? Delusions at best? "Mr. Dockerty, you can't expect me to believe that."

"What's not to believe? She was there, she went in the box, she disappeared. Went traveling into the future."

"But it was a cardboard box—"

"And how would you go about building a time machine?"

"I—I wouldn't know where to begin."

"So how would you or I know what is or isn't a valid way of traveling to the future? Maybe 200 years from now, it's common sense that the right combination of cardboard and Crayola will let you jump years back or years ahead."

"But if your daughter really did build a time machine, then why didn't she come back like all the other times?"

He looks down. There are a lot of different ways you can lose someone. Regardless of the how, it's the fact someone's gone that matters. I recognize that whether Galen Dockerty lost his daughter to disease, or to time, in the end, it probably doesn't matter to him.

"I wanted someone to know the story before I left."

"Before you left?"

He springs to his feet, more vigor than he has shown in the last hour, and walks behind the couch. I follow after, only to see an enormous cardboard box, sitting on one side. "I waited ten years for Lucy to come back, and never tried this thing myself. I think it's time I took a trip. I'm going to go to the past to keep her from ever going forward in time, so she'll never get sick."

"Mr. Dockerty—"

"You don't have to stick around if you don't want. You've got the story. Your part's done in this, and you can show yourself out." He lowers himself in jerky motions, until he's seated beside the box. He tries to tip it over himself. The blue veins protrude from the backs of his hands, his fingers shaking with effort.

I take the edges of the box, standing at awkward angle over the old man, and slowly tip the box over him. If it works, if he travels through time and stops Lucy from getting sick, what becomes of me in this moment? Change the past and everything about the future changes. Any bad time travel movie will teach you that. I'd have no reason to be in this place at all.

I stop, cutting myself off before I succumb to the old man's dream, this child's game of make believe. I don't know what I expect, don't know what good this could do. But I can't well leave him alone.

I lower the edge of the box until the backs of my fingers touch the ground, then let it drop with a light tap. "Good luck, Mr. Dockerty."

Hoarders

When we visit, you point out things you want us to have after you die. You've been doing this since before you turned fifty. The items you mention are "antiques" or collectibles, knick knacks and the rare actual

heirloom item like the family Bible. I don't really want any of it, although I am fond of those two fat bear cubs which are made out of some swirly, opaque glass. The ones in the locked cabinet

behind the table in the kitchen. The only locked cabinet among the many that line the graying walls of every room including the bathrooms. You never mention the smaller items--the photographs, the

handmade ornaments, the things that we have given you. Do they automatically revert back to the giver after you die? What would I do with the stainless steel paper clip holder I gave you while you were still working?

I keep paper clips in a box, an orange and black lacquered one that was given to me as a gift by a girl whose last name I don't even recall. When I die, who will return it to Rebecca Something?

Grammar

I have searched with a purpose
a desire to be heard
to find meaning
in thoughts and expressions
in spaces
period
or maybe a semi-colon
a pause and a stop
I'm caught in the middle
do I want to be the one on stage
or the girl behind the scenes?
yep, I say, that's me
but my thoughts do not fit in their mold
and my voice is too off-key for their choir
yet, when I take a direction
when I use the tools of the trade
I'm louder, stronger
and suddenly my voice rings out
echoing, like the freedom bell
because it's not what they think
it's purpose
a relationship
a purposeful relationship
and I don't have to be afraid
because I'm building a bridge with my words
and I'm filling in the gaps
with expressions of punctuation
forming sentences to the other side
where I'm still who I am
and my meaning is still my own.

Tú

Tú

Tú eres diferente
from me.

You had to:

cross the border every day
take out your passport and
sit in traffic, staring.

The barbed wire
to remind you of tu Mexicanidad.

I

Thousands of miles away
I never knew your border.
Mine was different:
piñatas and enchiladas,
mariachis and flan,
La Virgen above my bed,
bright pink cheeks when my friends said
"I can't understand your dad."

We

We used to wear matching bracelets,
"Best Friends Forever."
We promised we would never become
just primos –
separados por un país that makes
nosotras sound wrong.

Vosotros

Is a word we never use;
don't know how to use.
You lived in Tijuana,
I lived in translation.
Vosotros is a word we don't want to use.

She

She has a border too –
in a state where I tell her to carry ID everywhere she goes.
Colombian-Mexican-American.
Revise: Mexican-Columbian-American.
Chimichangas, cactus, cumbia.
Half sister. Three passports.
Answering only en Inglés.

They

can't tell the difference.

God's Teeth

they gnaw
at me

all through
Rome

the bloody sacred
hearts

crucifixes everywhere
the tombs

in Saint Peter's
the Pieta

under its plexiglass
box, Mary

and her broken
son

my broken
boy

I didn't get
to hold

he was
the one

in the
plexiglass box

and I
outside

the awesome
grief

like God's
teeth

in me
so many years

after I
discarded Him

do I still want
His love

to be the bride
of Christ

a young girl's
fantasy

God's teeth deep
in me

demand belief
but it's

absolution
I need

my boy in a box
why did he

die--was it
me

my sins
God's teeth

our
thief

The Quiet Room

The atoms that formed the breath of his words
traveled the distance from the son's lips
to the mother's ears.

Droplets of sweet truths fell gently to the floor.
Molecules of love and laughter lie there still –
the soft roll of an r,
the halting dispatch of an h.

Complete words reside within the drywall –
rousing, passionate discourse
and soft whispers of goodnight
penetrated paint and paper.

Caught and captured within the chalk,

fossilized by the moisture of maternal tears
and the steady strain of mounting silence,
they are sought without pick or shovel,

Buried just beyond her reach.

Whoever Broke into My Car at the Trailhead

Unlike me, out six nights under the slow stars,
you were in a hurry. Maybe spooked
by high beams slicing the dark.
But smashing the passenger side glass
as well as the liftback to unlatch a door?
Was it my out-of-state plates? Were you drunk
or just bored? Waiting for Triple A's wrecker
is no time to gloat, but I smile
to think of you rifling my duffel:
dirty underwear and socks, sandals, sneaks,
a razor and toothbrush, the shoeshine rag
and shampoo I mooched off Best Western.
That pennywhistle, though – I wish you knew
how many notes came out of it, riding my breath.
From the CDs strewn among glass crumbs
on the seat, we don't share taste in music,
but I won't tell Ladysmith or Kevin Burke.

Is it easier at night or under cover
of daylight? Why take one foldup beach chair,
not the other? And the buck-fifty-five
in my jeans – too petty, or didn't you bother
to look? Puny loot serves you right,
a slap you'll turn against some other
unsuspecting sap out for a break
from his workaday world. You're a vandal.
Thief? Burglar? Way too skilled,
all that lockpicking and safecracking,
for someone who busted a parked car
and mistook my spanking laptop
for the gray sweatshirt it was wrapped in.
The sheriff's report says larceny, but you
used a tire iron to bash constellations
in a rear window you couldn't even crawl through.
Larceny, my ass. You amateur. You hack.

Newgrange

When I walked into the ancient room of stone
with only the light from a match,
and when the light went out
left me more alone than
even the fear of dark –
which was everywhere
and nowhere,
which is where I was.
In there. Wombed.
Outside of even my own body.
Back in time. Yet timeless.
Blind. Eyes imagining
how things end.
Until the first rays of the sun
shone in the passageway,
and then into the central chamber
where I found I was sitting on
an altar as if a sacrifice
for the light as it reflected off
mirrors made of mica
set in concave stones
onto a single point in the ceiling.
Becoming a new year.

Wolf

In his studio
the stone carver awoke
to the *tick tack*
of the mantle clock;
or was it his heartbeat
that roused him?
Deep asleep on a moonlit night,
he was stirred from a dream
he could not recall.
But he knew this dream,
like a fever,
had carried him in its arms
somewhere.
Now in his iron bed he lay,
the sheets smeared with red
that stained his hands.
He glanced at his work—
a wolf's head
on the body of a man.
Why have I carved it?
He couldn't understand.
And when he went
to look in the mirror,
he saw his face.
What did I do?
He couldn't recall
and licked his dry lips,
tasted salt of sweat,
tinge of blood,
and pressed his palms to his eyes
to stop the tears.
Where have I been?
Has it happened again?
But no one heard,
except the wolf
whose stone head was lifted
in a silent howl.

TERRI KIRBY ERICKSON

Waves

for Tommy, 1959-1980

Standing waist-deep in the ocean, arms stiff at our sides like soldiers at attention, we could hear the waves winding like cartoon fists behind our backs, feel the suck and pull of water on our sunburned skins. According to the rules, we couldn't turn around. If you did, you were chicken. We cheated sometimes, if the roar was too loud, the tide too strong—but mostly, every wave surprised

us. Some were gentle swells that left us standing; others pushed our bodies sideways, but didn't sweep us off our feet. And then there were the rogue waves that curled above our heads—palms full of broken shells and seaweed, small fish sticking to their fingers

like glitter. One slap and we were tumbling through the murky, sand-swirled sea, elbows scraping the rough bottom until we washed up on shore—battered, bruised and often bleeding. It's harder now, the knock down and tumble of life, the getting up again, but I do it—remembering how you always laughed, rose from your knees and hit the waves, running.

She and I

We met on the rocks next to the rotting piles of an old marina in Larnaca on the day of our 1995 school trip. Veronika Mueller was already standing by the water when I reached the shore. Ten minutes after the teachers shouted, "Be back at three" as we students poured out of a bus, I had had enough of exploring the town. This was Cyprus, island of only four cities not under occupation, and I had explored all of them already. Only by the water, with boats pulling in and leaving, could I hope to find anything new. I had expected to be alone.

It was April, and hot, with a ten o' clock sun glaring off the sea. Before we had properly introduced ourselves, we had our shoes off, our trousers rolled to the knee. We splashed for a bit, laughed, then rested on the damp, sharp rocks close to the creaking wood of the pier. We talked while the sun made our hair so hot we could smell it. Fishing boats knocked against each other with that hollow, patient, small-harbor sound. We talked about books a little, but mostly we looked at the light dancing on the water. We looked at the water, which spread out and ended in confusion, mist and sky.

Our classmates, we knew, were shopping in packs. Hers in the tenth grade, mine in the eleventh, they bored us quickly. We'd attended The Limassol Grammar School for almost four years but never met. I had read an article of Veronika's in an earlier yearbook, but didn't know who she was. The writer claimed she loved to write. I had laughed because I was sure nobody else in my school could apprehend the secrets that I knew during the nights I spent with pencils and dim light. I was wrong. I write well; she writes better. I confuse myself with my own explanations of books; she makes things at once simple and deep. By the time I was a senior, we could compete for a poetry prize and never say I hope it's I rather than you who wins; there was a boy in my class who said his poem was brilliant so we had little hope anyway. It seemed so fitting, though, when our English teacher passed by in the yard and said she hoped we didn't mind sharing first place. She got a Fulbright for college because she is Cypriot; I got financial aid because I am American. So we both ended up students in the United States. My mother did all the applications for me, pointing to lines where I needed to sign; she did everything, explaining patiently to her parents the financial de-

tails required by the scholarship application. I started in physics; she knew it had to be English. I switched to English in my sophomore year. She switched to physics early in her sophomore year. We spoke little during college. She went to the west coast; I stayed in the east. I visited her in Santa Cruz; she never came to Ithaca. We both graduated English majors.

Back in the last two years of high school, she studied physics, chemistry, applied math, Greek and English literature. I had taken the same subjects a year before. She used my books. She got As in all four subjects and a C in English. I got the same. I wrote poems during math class, mostly addressed to a supercilious teacher who made jokes tinged with an irony that sounded hollow and coy. She lost patience with the supercilious math teacher earlier in the year than I had, so while my angry poems cover chapter eight diagrams of three dimensional geometry, solid cones, fructums of cones, cylinders, and blocks, she wrote hers in chapter five, in the white space between fists swinging stones, and the equations that calculate centripetal force.

I am intelligent but she is far more so; she finds simple solutions to the most complex of problems. I write interesting things once in a while but must labor to edit out confusion; she writes the deepest things and they are easy to understand. I started off as a teacher in one school or another, changing every year looking for a match; I went back to school myself and seem to be making a fresh start. She graduated university and stopped writing entirely and her insights are wasted; only I get to hear them. She started tutoring, though intermittently; I tutored all my private students every week and kept up with their progress. She still picks up jobs and drops them again, a temp here and there because nothing is interesting enough, nothing is good enough.

In school, we spent little effort on makeup and clothes. But when we go out, she looks perfect and I look plain. I wear eye shadow and garner compliments—sometimes. At least the effort is noticed. She wears eye shadow in ways that make it look like part of her face, that uncanny loveliness. In fact, when a summer job training session required everyone to go in made up for their skills to be evaluated, she was sent home, because the trainer refused to believe that her perfectly made up face was anything but natural beauty. They didn't even notice the mascara. I never noticed the mascara. Did you know that one must wear mascara in addition to all other make-up, however slight? She says it is common knowledge. I say she should publish a rulebook and after that complain.

For she was born with taste. I have developed some competence, but

only thanks to many consultations with the natural. She wears jeans and a simple turquoise top and turns heads. She is in fashion, or rather ahead of the fashion, at every moment because she gets the magazines early, when they come out, for the purpose of informing people who understand. But Veronika is never ostentatiously in fashion; she didn't wear the plaid thigh-length skirts that came out, or the cheesy plastic earrings. Light on the plastic, even when eighties came back in 2005, she advised. I secretly question the entire point of fashion. I would prefer to go on wearing the turtle neck I bought in 1991 because it is comfortable, has only one barely noticeable hole and matches almost all of my other clothes. I was told by my boss at the small school where I taught English to spruce things up a bit, look a little less like a gypsy. I started with hand-me-downs from Veronika, last year's fashion, some year's fashion at least.

Each season there's another rule, another self-evident principle violated left and right by the fashion dummies. Capris with high heels, Bermuda-length with low heels or is it the other way around? If your calves are thick, wear only narrow heels. If they are scrawny, do platforms.

Accessorizing is key, Veronika says. She chooses the handbag, jewelry and hair clips with so much attention it seems she never thought about it but I just can't. When I told her I couldn't balance an equation with so many variables, shoes and trousers and top plus the jewelry, earrings necklace and a ring, she said, sure, that would be a lot for you; forget about coordinating all that. Wear silver. For five years, I have worn silver earrings, bracelets and rings: the fashion-protégé-of-Veronika signature. I hunt for sales, and wear whatever bargain I find. She devises outfits and to construct them she will hunt for a specific item in each store in two cities.

As for food. Like all the girls in our city of our generation, she and I have an obsession with thin. I run, she uses the gym. I eat fat free, she counts carbs. She uses olive oil, I use the spray for a fat free sauté. We both consume inordinate amounts of aspartame. She has sugar in her morning coffee because she needs solid food. I don't. I am fearful and have been known to starve myself slowly without ever skipping a meal, then gain again imperceptibly at least to me so I can handle the rioting madness of my wounded vanity; she will eat and enjoy and then diet so methodically it scares me.

On faith. She thinks all religions are dumb. I go to church each Sunday. But. When I am at her house, she always remembers to ask while stirring coffee for me—is today a fasting day? She always has some beans or bread for me. She says religions are pointless; she also says that it is good that I can say this to a religious person. I do understand, I say, and I'm glad

you feel that way. Also, it is interesting that you the irreligious take care of your friends and compared to you, I am the bitch. I say, let them get hurt. I teach, though not very well. She says she hates teaching, but does it so well. She is an extrovert, she says, and proves it when she talks at parties and gets everyone's attention. They all listen for her voice. But does anyone know her, really, and if they do, do they know her better than my friends know "introverted" me?

I finger the telephone and plan what I will say; she says just call and words will come; I say they won't although they will for you.

On the beach Veronika and I toasted our skin into the color we liked, light brown, her German genes evincing something a little redder than my more olive tint but still close enough so that we looked like sisters. Once in a while we rubbed on sunscreen, but usually she or I just toted it as a sort of token of our judicious bent, our understanding of the principle by which one prevents skin cancer. But we baked anyway, unprotected and chic, and I sucked up can upon can of aspartame-laced colas while she extinguished cigarettes in the sand. Before leaving we kicked sand over the crinkled cigarettes and bent rings.

Sometimes I would ask her if she noticed how the water glistened, how gold seemed to be dancing on the bay. And she would say, Joanna that is just sunlight, hand me my sunglasses in fact because it's making me dizzy. Then I used to run out like a child looking for mermaids and pretend she was my mother, so that when I swam quickly, I hoped she would notice and when I disappeared behind the wave breaker, I hoped she would worry.

When the sand was all brushed off we'd go for coffee, our reward for enduring sunlight so long and, also, for my ambition in swimming out to the rocks. Our favorite café was Flo-Café because of its leather couches on the beach. We would sit under an umbrella and hope the iced coffee came quickly, as if there was a reason to hurry after three or four hours lying on the sand. Often, we met the waiters, who would wonder why we spoke both Greek and English like natives and considered us a pair, asked for our stories, as if the doubleness of the mystery confirmed its truth. We speak the same, it's true; but she lived in Cyprus all her life; I was born abroad.

She had many men friends and she loved them all; I had a few and found them boring, ugly, annoying. At a club she dances, and I dance too, but everybody watches her; I watch her. When she dances even the beer can in her hand glistens sexy, green, sweating, the script of the brand name curling beneath her thumb. Veronika dances and everyone watches, if not openly, like I do, then from the corner of an eye, or from the corners of the club. The

men move closer with a finger or an eyelid twitching; they hope to dance in front of her or next to her just close enough.

Men slide off me like too much rainwater, like a magnet off aluminum. She is "hot" as the boys so love to say, blowing the word out of a throat on fire; she is attractive, as the girls say. I know the corners of her beauty, the precise proportionality of torso and thigh, the perfected arch of her eyebrows, and the endless tempest in her eyes. If her looks were less magnificent, I would be jealous, and wonder—why her over me?

As things stand, though, I laugh, and I love her; we can sit at a café, she and I, and let the men come and admire; they try to be unobvious, discreet; we laugh. When men come up, a little shy, and oh so eager, they look at me—less of a challenge—and I smile and talk a little until I am bored and then they turn to her. She makes men's eyes widen, and their cheeks stretch to the edge of their faces in smiles. I love to watch the men, watch them start to melt away and fish around for things to say. I laugh a little because the voices of the huskiest and tallest men tend to weaken most when they get a little bit of her attention; she humors them a while and I humor her.

All this happens before the men know she likes to watch football and called in sick several times during the World Cup. When the men learn this, they often turn away as one turns from a miracle. We talk about the future, then, the only things waiting for us.

She says do not as I do, find yourself a husband, settle down; I say do as I do, go back to school or find decent employment—as if teaching one another to give up the simple, slightly-happy limbos of celibacy or no-career, this, the meager advice of our love, might slow down the spiraling orbit of a silent, nameless devastation that, sometimes, when we lie together in the sand, hip by sweat-glistening hip, we apprehend while laughing at the men, who steal glances from behind their tinted glasses—who steal glances at the empty spaces between our breasts.

ELIZABETH FOGLE

The Invitation

On an island of pelicans and thimbleweed,
we'll wear white cotton.

I'll find you sprawled across linens like fog
lifting from the sound,

sand settled at your dusty feet. I'll kiss
your sleepy scalp,

your long, yawning fingers. We will go up –
bare feet, pink sand.

No one around for miles, no one. Not even us –
as we wind our pearl bodies

up the lighthouse stair, we won't be here at all –
nothing but whispers,

speaking too much weight for handkerchief skin –
we'll forget that we ever

had names. We'll forget we ever had faces.
Everything we see

will fill with blue. Sky blue. Ocean blue. Sapphire.
Cobalt. Navy.

Watching Fireflies

"The moon," you say, though just an eye-slit of it winks among the scuttling clouds. We set our chaises in the grass and side by side look up, afraid to look beside – not fearful of the dark around but of the desert places grave within that keep the other out. The clouds grow full. "The fireflies," I say. Our looks draw nearer, safe in flickers, safe as brief, reflexive glints that fade before the strokes of light burn long enough to make us know that we've been touched. "The moon is gone," I say. How many years, I wonder, has the brightness been obscured? How long have fireflies against the trees replaced the bright illuminating moon and we not noticed? "Yes," you say, "I know." The darkness prickles soft against my eyes, reminding me that light had drawn us close, but dark has grown until we've reached the point where we can only touch by watching fireflies.

But touch we do, not touching, eyes together seeking each new sparkling; thoughts no longer disparate but joined, attracted once again to light however small – assurance that the moon lives on behind the cloud.

TYLER GOBBLE

Something You Might Not Realize

It is a good thing I think
for you to say to people

*good job and nice shirt
you are real and I love you*

I don't care who you are
the highly educated like it as do

short people and shy people
especially the shy ones

and teachers and your dad.
Go up to him and say

Dad, you are nice. Thanks.
Watch him turn to a puddle

of day old snow, mushy
and melted, because of you.

*Good job, I'd say if you did
this and I love you for sure.*

The Gift

She bends over the large laundry hamper loaded
with sheets washed, ironed, folded, neat and crisp
shuts the lid, and shifts the hamper onto the truck.

She knows all the customers, knows all the routes,
speaks in a rough country accent recalling the time
her father wept, so many years passed, yesterday

a tough farm laborer, tears pouring down his rough,
weather worn cheeks, when she was just a slip of a girl
working her first job, in this laundry, this same laundry,

in this same dank room, small windows high up, cold
concrete floor, the machines run by great pulley belts
from a steam engine, when only the rich had electricity,

before the roads were paved, the laundry collected
and delivered with horse drawn wagons, the hours long
and hard, when she brought home her first pay envelope

gave to her father what he had never before touched—
a crisp five dollar bill—

EMILY HAYES

Response to an Unwelcome Love Letter

In early May, my husband burned leaves
in last year's garden. Piles of oak and maple,
heaped up since fall, fell to ash over hollow
sunflower stems and sprigs of wild thyme.

For hours, he stood in a cloud of smoke,
using his rake to turn earth and soot, until
the sky turned black as crow, and wind
and rain snuffed out the flames. We woke

at midnight, surprised to see a few embers
smoldering, like secrets hidden under seasons
of dirt and decay. A week later, at Dickerson
Cemetery, I read poems to periwinkle and

and daylilies, groundcover that crept up the
sides of tree trunks and shaded forgotten
tombstones. Mid afternoon, a sudden gust
ripped your letter from my book and tossed

pages of presumption over tall grasses
and sunshine, and into the pond, yards away.
And on that day, I wished for stronger winds and
seething fire, whatever it might take to burn you out.

Night Road

It must have been the track of rabbit
that restless men followed through Ozark hills—
the zig, the zag of the hunted,
the only thread through cross-hatched brush,
beaten finally into the road our car now travels.
We loop and backtrack along terraced hills
until we think we'll meet ourselves.
This asphalt ribbon twists past fruit stands,
perpetual yard sales, trailers with wind-buckled skirts,
past hills spotted with cattle, with goats,
hills mown, nipped, fenced into pastoral poverty.

But it's a different road at night
when the pavement merges into darkness,
and it seems as likely we'll drive off
the earth's flat edge
as find the curve of the near horizon.
We follow car lights through blackness
that has vanished fruit stands and sagging trucks,
cling to these lights that bounce off hills
and catch the eye gleam of the hunted.
We settle more firmly into seats,
hold more tightly to the arm rest,
look out side windows into darkness
thick as a closed tomb,
know a house is there, a barn,
cattle, even, sleeping in the night,
know, too, the black night is a veil
impossible to cross.
We turn back to the lights washing the trees gray,
cling to that guiding sphere until the lights of town are made.

JANE HICKS

*The Color of Loss
for Barry and Larry*

It's the dark inside a grape, a bruise,
storm clouds purpling an afternoon
grown cross with heat. It's a shadow
under the porch, blackberries stored in
dark cellars, a pond bottom,
shapes move in the deep.

It's a moonless hollow, the underside of
owl's wing, clotted fur after screeched skirmish,
two huddled shadows in a porch swing,
one egg, two breaths, one soul.

It's a stain on fine linen after funeral food,
dark papered dining rooms, high ceilings,
candles burned to sooty stubs.

It's an empty pillow, a tangled
deathbed, the shadowed eyes of the twin
who stares long into the night and waits
his still half to speak.

Daffodil

Nothing helps
to say, lightly,

the daffodils
bloom

for such
a short time.

Not even the reeds
in the wind,

nor the butterfly
staggering

out of bogbean
into the air,

nor the swans
flying by.

Finding Beauty

Sometimes it is in Central Kentucky
among trailer parks and rundown barns.

The boy in red overalls picking flowers
from his grandmother's front yard.
Sweat matting his blonde hair
and topsoil streaked across his face –
his yellow shovel reflecting sunlight
as he waves to strangers who pass by.

Two calves running toward each other
with clumsy two-month-old legs. Their eyes
the same color as ground they kick up –
fur still wet from their mothers' tongues.

How the last week of May tastes
when all the blossoms have come out –
each breeze sweet, like ripened strawberries.
Robin's songs heard through the rain,
hidden in magnolia trees that almost reach
the edge of gutters, five stories up.

Last night, walking through grass wet with late dew
beside you, the sound of occasional traffic
breaking the crickets' rhythm. You, with eyes set
on dawn and a tulip poplar blossom in your palm,
humming the tune of an old folk hymn –
light from streetlamps we pass staining your face.

Just Getting There

It started at a gas station
in Gary, Indiana.

She couldn't find
the Styrofoam cups,
and swore she searched
the far corners of the store.

They were, naturally,
at the coffee station
next to a sign that read
Cups Here, Limit One.
I have learned to make

these discoveries quietly.
I held the cup out to her,
blanketing the sign
with my back.

There are a few moments
when secrets should be
given away for free –
left only for the clerk

to laugh off her graveyard shift
and help forget this November.

Mayme
a novel excerpt from Trading Moons

1913

It is the month of August in Selma, like it is the month of August everywhere in the whole world as far as I can see. The heat pins us down like a rude dog. It is chewing on the backbone of every day. Summer's set the world on fire and the heat shakes us like a rag.

Tilde, Maggie, Roselma and me are sitting on the front porch at Easter Street, listening to how Baby Lucille will not quit her wailing. Maybe she is a little too hot this morning, or maybe she is hungry like me. She is crying and crying.

Tilde, second oldest after me, comes running up to pronounce what she believes is a great idea. "Let's put dirt in the hole," she says, referring to the baby's mouth, agape.

I consider it some and then tell her, "Nah, Tilde. Mother'd get us if we did."

Tilde scratches the top of her head, and I wonder if she's sprouting lice again or what. I am too hot to get up and look, so I glance away.

There, leaned against the wall of our ramshackle house, sits Maggie the next oldest after Tilde, second born away from me. She is chewing on one of her toenails. Mother likes to say this is one of the worst habits a human being can have for itself, and though I am only eight years old and nearly nine, I surely do agree.

"Stop it, Maggie," I tell her, but all Maggie does is turn her big blue eyes up to me and keep on gnawing. She knows I am not her mother or even her big sister, and she fails to be scared of me on account of it. I go over and smack her on the foot anyway. She starts hollering.

Meanwhile, Tilde has snuck over to the box and smeared dirt all over the baby's face. Maggie is still whining from her foot-smacking, but at least the baby is quiet now and not wailing. Tilde looks proud for having caused the peace, but just as I am thinking on that, Roselma the knee-high child, falls from the porch and starts to screaming. She's struck her little head on the throwed-away brick.

It is all too much for me. I can take no more of the racket, so I decide to knock on the front door. I reach right through the hole in the screen and

knuckle our door for all it's worth.

"Mother!" I call. "Mother, you best come on out here. The baby quit her crying, and Roselma done hit her head."

I blam on the door as hard as my fist is able, but Mother does not come to answer. Maybe she cannot hear my knocking for all the outside clamor.

"Mayme, look!" says Tilde, running up, and I turn my head to see. There comes a man striding through our yard, and it is Daddy, Mr. JD Cross. We hardly ever see him, and today it don't much appear to be him, all dressed up and shiny, wearing a matching suit of pants and coat, color of magnolias in bloom, same tint the rich folks wear. When he gets to the bottom step and puts one foot on the top rung, I spy his brand new shoes. I keep my knuckles stuck to the door, but ogle him in a real long glare.

He says, "What are you staring at?"

"You," I say. "You going somewhere?"

He says, "Yeah, might be. For a little while. Maybe longer. All depends."

My jaw goes to sawing, like it does when I get mad. I say, "'Fore you go off, you reckon you can get Mother out here on the porch for me?"

He looks around. His jaw ain't sawing. It is clamping and unclamping like a vice. He shakes his head no, but then changes his mind.

"Oh, I reckon I can try," he says, stepping up and banging his fist on the door so loud it makes Roselma quit her crying. She crawls back up on the porch with a skinny stripe of blood running down her forehead. Tilde goes over and rubs some dirt on it, too. She likes dirt a lot. She'll most likely grow up as a farmer.

While Daddy is waiting for Mother to answer the door, he looks over at the baby in the box. It must be that Tilde put a little too much dirt in the hole, for Daddy rushes right over to Baby Lucille, and he starts screaming, "She's turning blue! Baby Lucille is turning blue!"

Well, he picks her up fast, flips her upside down and goes to whacking the tiny space between her little shoulder blades. It seems to me he is beating our baby to death, so I run over and start pounding on his backside like nobody's business.

"You let our baby go, Daddy! You put that baby down!"

Suddenly, a big chunk of black mud flies out of the baby's mouth and hits Daddy's pants, right in front of his Thing.

He shouts, "Shit-shit!" and resets the baby in her box. He turns around real quick. He kicks in the front door. His foot tears our poor shabby screen

to further smithereens. The door flies open. It slaps the inside wall, twice.

There in the cool dark of our silent house lays Mother, all sprawled out on the couch and snoring like some old lady-hog, asleep. Daddy don't go inside. He just stays on the porch with me, staring at Mother through the dimness of that smelly room. He looks at her whiskey bottle too, knocked over on the floor. I look at him. He studies her. Mother don't twitch an eye. Flies buzz by. She seems dead to the world, but she ain't—not yet anyway, I don't believe.

Behind us, the woman in the buggy yells out sweetly, "JD? Is everything alright?"

Well, if I ain't ever heard music before in my life, I do at this very instant. That woman's voice floats to me like butter and sugar, all at once. The sound of it reaches out and snags my Daddy for all he's worth.

He looks down at me with a sad-sack face and says, "Mayme-girl, I got to go."

I look around at all the mess and the youngins and the heat waves wiggling up off the neighbors' roofs. A lazy black crow calls from the tree top, "Un-unh. Un-unh." His flapping out of the tree makes wind on the leaves. Maybe Daddy's leaving will give us a breeze.

I say, "Alright then, Daddy."

"Okay, then," he says. "I'll be seeing you around."

I give him the stink-eye. "Okay, then. Bye."

Just as he rides away with that woman in her carriage, Roselma falls off the porch again. She and the baby start up a crying contest. Tilde goes to digging in the front yard with a spoon. She is making hills bigger than the baby. Maggie starts chewing on the toenails of her other foot. I look in at Mother throwed out on the couch, and I decide I have had it with the whole wide world.

"Shit-shit!" I yell just like my Daddy, but I don't kick in no doors or break any worthless screens. I just wait for something good to happen. Maybe *this* is how you call down Help. I think, and I wait for It to come barreling out of the sky, like a meteor come bolting. I imagine It streaking a trail through the heavens and splitting the clouds to sunder. I picture Help sliding down the Blue Ridge Mountains, lighting off the sycamores, bouncing to the red oaks, and springing off the feather boughs of dark green cedars. I see Help rolling from the foothills to the flatlands. I see It searching everywhere, till—at last—it whirls into the center of our dry dirt yard, and It comes to a screeching halt. When the dust of Its spinning settles, I vision Help striding up and staring into the faces of me and all the little girls. Between all of us

youngins. It'll pick the pupils of my brown eyes to gaze into. Then, Help's sudden voice will snap through the air like the whip of some holy angel, and It will say, "Girl! Was that YOU called down my name?"

I would answer Help with a gap-tooth smile and a nod of my shaggy head.

But, hey, I know all that's just crazy thinking. It is the stuff that lays back, wanting, in the clouds of my young mind. It ain't nothing but wishes, stuck between the layers of my brains. I am quick starting to believe that Help is a slippery thing—that it does not come after you and offer up its services, no matter how bad you might want it—no matter the needs of your poor little soul.

If Help is going to act like It's too good for me, I might as well act like I'm too good for It. I will live life on my own, without It. We'll see what Help thinks about *that*.

I plop down like a lump on the steps and stare at where that woman's carriage used to be. Seems like I can still see it there at the edge of our street: sunlight glinting off the door handles; that woman sitting in the shade, tilting her head like a delicate bird; the shadows of the day turning her yellow dress gray; that gray tinting the waves of her reddish-brown hair to the color of flat, dead coffee.

I don't care what she looks like. I wish I could go with that woman and her sugar voice too, but then—where in the world would that put me, I think—someplace any different, someplace one bit better? I don't know. Everything's a mystery to me, and as I sit on the porch studying the fact that mysteries and cussing don't impress Help enough to actually get It down here on the face of the earth, Tilde and Roselma and Maggie come draping their arms over my shoulders and leaning into me, giggling. They have pulled up the baby's box behind us and are sitting down all around me. I guess we look right pretty, grinning back and forth to one another, like dolls in a show. Maybe it's that Baby Lucille is finally sleeping, instead of wailing, that we have a chance to be happy for a while. I hope that she is still breathing.

Tilde looks up and says, "You like all the holes I digged in the yard, Mayme?"

I tell her, "Yeah, Tilde. You done a lot, didn't you?"

She says, "Yeah," and the day keeps right on going, just like nothing ever happened.

I hide from the breeze of Daddy's leaving, though. It feels more like the wind of a hurricane.

1916

The cold of November is setting in around us. The wood in the stove has nearly gone out. We children are huddled together in our one bed with all the quilts in the house piled on top. We let the dog in, so he could keep us warmer in the bed. I have to pee, but the outhouse is too far out to go to walking through the colden rain. We all use the cook pot instead and are happy we can stay inside. Mother is sick in her bed. She is coughing and will not stop. I guess we will not have any kind of Thanksgiving this year. I am only eleven and have never in my life thought about cooking Thanksgiving.

We ain't seen Daddy in a while.

Baby Lucille waddles over to Mother's bed. It has been cold in the house for a long time now. How that child can cry continuous, amazes me to pieces. Her little voice sounds like a croaky frog. We ain't got water from the sink. I think it's froze in the pipes. Lucille crawls up with Mother in the bed. She shakes Mother on the shoulder, and Mother's whole body moves like a board. She does not open her peepers. I believe something terrible has gone wrong. She ain't coughed the whole night through. She ain't called for a drink or nothing. I think she might have wet the bed. Her covers look a darker damp.

There's knocking at the door, but we are too cold to go and answer. I yell, "Come on in!" We don't care who it is. We are past hungry and thirsty and are shivering beyond all care. Maybe it's the Big Bad Wolf. I will eat him if it is.

Doc Enders is here with the church ladies. There's two other men as well. The women pinch their noses. I reckon we must stink. Look at the children, they say behind their closed hands. I can only stare. My sisters are all asleep. Doc Enders starts giving orders, and we are taken in a heap. We are wrapped up and taken in a heap. The night is like a long dark tunnel. I cannot tell if we are getting warmer. I think I wet my step ins.

Mother is dead. We are clean. We have new dresses and coats and socks and shoes. The church ladies scrubbed off our skin and cut our hair. The baby has new diapers, must be a thousand of them; we will never have to wash another one. Daddy says we cannot stay at the house anymore, because Mother has up and died. We have to put her in the ground. A lot of people show up to see her being put in the ground. Some of them come from a place

called George. I know our Daddy is right—we cannot stay at the house no more, because I don't know how to cook, and I barely know how to clean. He thinks I could not raise my sisters on my own, but it's been me doing it all along. He just don't know. Daddy's just never around. He says we're going on a trip. Says him and Uncle John are taking us all up north. He wants me to stay with our Aunt Darthy. She is married to a man with big money. Daddy spells it out. He says, "B-i-g-m-o-n-e-y." She lives at the beach where Daddy says I can have fun. He says I can play in the sun and build castles out of sand. They will leave me there, and they will go back home.

Daddy and Aunt Darthy get in a yelling contest. Uncle John's asleep in the car. I am busy trying to keep the youngins calm. They are trying to be louder than the grown-ups. Their racket and the winter wind makes my ears hurt. I smack all their little hands and make the girls sit down on the stoop. Daddy tells Aunt Darthy she owes him at least this much—to take care of me for a change. That makes her angry, and she tells him, "You know I'm too nervous to be anybody's mother!" and she slams the door in his face. He tells me to stay put on the stoop. He says Aunt Darthy'll be back in a little bit. Him and Uncle John and my sisters all leave. Maybe they went for hot chocolates. I get mad at them. Aunt Darthy don't come back in a little bit; I spend the night on the steps. It is very cold. Next morning, Aunt Darthy opens up the door and stands there with her fists all crammed into her waist. She's frowning. Her beady little eyes are flitting everywhere. She is a scary-looking sight, and I do not want to stay with the likes of her even if she is married to Bertram b-i-g-m-o-n-e-y. She gets closer and says, "Mayme, come here." I go, but not because I want to. It is just warmer by the door. She reaches down and pins this note onto the collar of my shirt. Then she tells me her keeper, Esther, is going to take me to the station, and I am to ride a train and won't that be fun and she laughs like a little bird. Esther comes out patting her big wet eyes with a hanky and looking at Aunt Darthy like Aunt Darthy's the cruellest woman in the world. Seeing Esther all teary makes me want to break down and have at it too, but instead, I climb into Mr. Big Money's automobile with Esther, and we ride to the station like some mixed-up traveling show. That is, all but Aunt Darthy. She stays home by herself. Might as well, because I don't want her, and I wouldn't keep her if I had her. She ain't been no help to me.

By late afternoon, the train pulls into Selma Station. The man who walks up and down the aisles asking for tickets comes and stands by my

seat. He smiles real nice and tells me there'll be a fella waiting for me on the dock, when I get off the train. Says his name is Mr. Pollard, and he'll help me get to where I'm supposed to go. I ask the nice man where that might be, and he says according to the note pinned on my shirt, my destination is The Shortfield Home for Orphan Children.

I would start up crying, but I think my wailing would never cease.

Mr. Pollard is waiting on the dock, alright. He's a shifty-looking man. He has a long, thin scar on his cheek. I can't stop looking at it, it's so pink and long. Once I get situated in his automobile, he catches me staring, so I ask him about the scar. I ask him where it's from. He laughs out of the side of his mouth, and his eyes start hazing over, like he's in some kind of dream. He tells me some little old Indian gal put it there, twenty-four years ago. Says she marked him for life so he would always remember. I ask him, remember what? And he shifts his eyes from the road to me. They are the color of mine, only golder. They gleam with a meanness I ain't ever seen, and he says it's her she wants him to remember. I turn away fast-fast and gather into the circle of my own arms. I believe I have just met the Devil. I never felt so alone. He guns his automobile, and we fly from the Selma Station.

The Shortfield Home for Orphan Children is a tidy, red-brick place. Little ones are always coming and going, and you never know what kind of family's going to pick you out of the crowd to go home with them. Tilde is the child of the Thomas's now and Maggie belongs to the preacher's set. Roselma's living with the Jones's—they're kin to Doc Enders who saved us from the cold. He was the one pronounced Mother dead. I ain't ever been so by myself alone.

Here at the Home, there's a girl that looks just like me. She lives in the basement, under the Devil's house. I feel sorry for her. Everybody likes to talk about what the Devil does to her, but nobody seems willing to stop him.

I slow down one day on the walking path and take a glance at her. She is looking through the window at me. She tilts up her chin, and I do the same. I think at first, I'm looking into a mirror, she looks so much like myself, but the Devil comes up behind her, and I see his lips move. He tells her something. He is talking. She nods and turns away. He sees me out the window, but I am not afraid. He thinks just because he is the Head of this Orphan Home everybody is afraid of him. Well, I am not—not anymore. I

never smile at the Devil, and that makes me feel stronger against him. I am helping myself to courage, but bravery has its price; nobody's ever picked me to go home with them. They say, "What's wrong with that girl? Why ain't she a happy child? Why don't she ever smile?"

Well, I don't care what they say. I plan on leaving this place in three short years. I will be nearly fifteen by then, and to me, that is just about growed. See, the Devil don't fool me one bit. I know there is more to the world than just Shortfield, North Carolina. There's more to life than just biding time at this Home, living by His rules and catering to all His little whims.

I can make it on my own in this big cruel world, and I won't count on getting help from nobody—not the Devil nor Help, neither one. Never mind my daddy, too. He's Mister G.O.N.E. Gone.

JULIET KERICO

Virga

Distracted,
wipers smear a stoplight

across my windshield. I think
blood red is the color

of a closing throat, an air tunnel
the width of a straw feels like

running into wind or the sound of
junk mail shuffling its tune. I hear

*White Noise Written for Rain Clouds
in the Key of Hiss.*

Last summer your chin
at my shoulder, my ear

to your lips, we saw
isolated storms building

shafts in the western sky.
You murmured, "Out here water falls

without hitting the ground." Awake,
dawn, on the back of my hand—

scent of water forced over rock, of the river,
of *your neck*. Here,

in the flat world, we are
explorers circling the square, seeking

Paradise, *horizon's edge*, where
hidden evidence of shifts, boulders

tossed & fallen now wedged they
balance each other. You

over canyons, so distant,
arms outstretched against

red sky, walking a high-line,
leaning left to touch

a setting sun. I think
bull's eye.

Blitz

Didn't have a name
for what was in the air.
Just a sun throwing its rays

around. Clouds
in a huddle. Cheering

in the distance.
1994. Deion Sanders
in a 49ers jersey,

staring down former teammates
on the Falcons. Him high-stepping

an interception
into the end zone
was all a 13-year-old

knew of grace. I fought
my friends to be number 21,

not knowing something else
marked us, that everything
beyond our parents

taunted us like linebackers,
that even the sun
was a quarterback

the clouds rushed
on the field of sky.

Lesson Learned

Sitting in the car, along the leather seats,
I could smell your intoxicating scent,
seeping through each nook and folding crease.
Your love for me was more than I could've dreamt.

The twinkle in my eyes told you just what I meant:
cradled in your arms, forever I was lost.
But, it is only a memory now, like the big dent in the car;
you scarred my heart, now covered in moss.

My life was run your way, the big bad boss.
So, I had to teach you a lesson and I pressed the gas;
I had to make you feel my pain, no matter the cost.
Now I sit here in this jail cell, thinking on the past.

Why did you go and mess things up?
I wish I'd known before that I was so tough.

ELLARINE LOCKIE

Offerings to the Green Gods

Not alley stench or gnaw of smog
but scrape of Marshweed's viola/bass tune-up
scour of motors and smell of exhaust
Cause the air at the entrance of the Hollywood/Western
Metro station to hold its breath

Then the exhale rush of twenty-some passengers
who sweep across the platform like prairie wind
to settle on a small plot of brown ground
They wear tie-dyed T-shirts, tattoos, brimmed hats
a Batman costume, batik sarong, crocheted cap
One pushes a wheelbarrow holding
bags of soil and two toddlers
A stealth platoon toting succulents, spades
plastic jugs of water and babies on backs

Marshweed music rides the breeze
and ushers the espionage
Freight train freight train run so fast
Freight train freight train run so fast
Please don't tell what train I'm on
So they won't know what route I've gone

Mr. Stamen already on hands and knees
issues orders like prayers
A video cameraman follows a woman
who carries a chalkboard with the words
"Guerrilla Gardening" and messages
like "Looking for local person to water"

She asks one of the toddlers
what is his favorite plant
He says "Daddy" through a mouthful of granola
Picks up a feather to stroke his father's check

as the father puts a painted lady into the ground
And the wing is on the bird
And the bird is in the nest
And the nest is on the branch

The redhead holding a jade plant introduces
herself as Ginger and her partner as Desert Rose
The only girl I've ever loved
was born with roses in her eyes
Not even a siren's scream can cloud
the well-oiled hum of this mission
Murmurs as reverent as Sunday morning stop passers-by
Who seem to forget train schedules
and the gray hair of frenzy

Thirty minutes later the crusaders pack-up
in an undercover of quiet
Leave thermoses of beer for the band
And stir the air once more with their exit
to the train for the next Metro stop
Where another brown patch waits to be reborn
and where another band will perform the offertories

Freight train freight train run so fast
Freight train freight train run so fast
Please don't tell what train I'm on
So they won't know what route I've gone

Pelicans at Prayer

Somber and orderly mourners,
they stand on the spit of sand,
their heads bowed low
so still and dark on this
gleaming low-tide beach,
causing a reverence in my breast
a wondering at their holy gathering.

I watch from respectful distance
but I want to join them there,
put on my dark wings,
fold them down,
bow my head low too
and whisper low bird murmurings
or stand silent as they do,
strong sentries of the Carolina coast.

Now they walk, single file,
as if behind a caisson.
I wonder if, this far away,
they can taste the oil, the waste.
Is it a far-off funeral that they hold
for their brothers in the gulf,
for oysters and oyster po-boy cooks,
shrimp and shrimpers?

Later that day, I see my birds again
this time in familiar military V
the brown air force
I have loved since childhood.
Their patrol I once was sure
could find lost children on the beach.
But now too much is lost
and yet they fly.

Fourth of July

Similes about fountains
and just who bought the fireworks
don't really matter. But I refuse
to rename our parents
with names we didn't use
or to pretend patriotism was our goal,
above family.

Mummy's potato salad—
always requested & always made
in Paw's old Tom & Jerry bowl—
became an important part of our Family 4th.
We all gathered at Michael's about three,
so our kids could get in the pool.
The pool was a stock tank bought by our parents.

Of course, we had a cookout:
hamburgers, hot dogs, watermelon,
the works. Someone always prayed before
we ate. And we were silently thankful
we were a family together.
No one mentioned independence.

but sometimes we relived family memories
like wearing Indian shoes, while pounding
crazy hammers overloaded with caps
& having to wait for Daddy to retrieve
multi-colored feather-tops from the roof,
after work.

Often there was a rain delay.
We waited forever for dark every year—
chatting & laughing—
before we decided which kids
were old enough to be trusted
with matches and punk.

Cabbage Battles

Mother marches in from the scorching July heat with another bag of heads. She spreads them over the counter by the sink. Each waits to be cleaned, chopped, salted, packed. All summer, we've watched the cabbages grow firm and round, sixty plants set and raised in unison, like soldiers across the hillside, now relieved their watch at the hands of my mother, armed with a kitchen knife to divide them from their necks.

She pulls away leaves, scans for worms, signs of decay, carries them home to make kraut. I help her shred, down and back, down and back, trying not to nick my fingers. I grate the green leaves into fine strings, make a brine and pack in the crock to pickle, wait for it like the flies gathered by the doors. They love nothing better than the smell of cabbage.

Mother says we must work while the moon grows old. Kraut made under the wrong signs won't be fit to eat. Other heads will become relish and freezer slaw, none worth eating to me. I'm convinced cabbage is of the devil. My mother shakes her head, wonders what happened to my Teutonic genes — my cousins love sauerkraut, were born to it. But she will wait, gather her strength for a campaign she can win.

MARSHA MATTHEWS

Pastor Visits Parishioner

I see them sitting on the couch, Almajean's hand held
by a man I don't know.

His fingers feel every knuckle,
every nail.

My eyes move to the ceiling, the plastic light bowl
frothed with wing dust.

Along the base,
an almost imperceptible crack.

"This here's my cousin, Jeffrey, of Saltville,
up far side of Clinch Mountain?"

The hand he holds isn't hers.
Or is it? It isn't
attached.

She looks at me looking,
chuckles. "Oh, you didn't know?
Well, how could you?
In church, I clap right along with the rest."

Jeffrey hands her the prosthesis
as if passing a chalice.
"See, y-y-years ago,
power saw slipped."

"Never mind." Almajean takes the hand
"I didn't feel it."
She adjusts a pillow, leans back.
"The pain was - someplace else."

She nods at a chair.

I pull it close.

"Times was hard, then. Railroad on strike,
my son - "

Her voice teeters.

"was licking crumbs
from cereal boxes
thrown for trash.

Talk about pain."

She attaches her hand.

"If not for the insurance . . ."

Jeffrey's eyes skirt my face,

my eyes on framed photos: her son,
Navy Seal, college graduate,
his eyes

on Mom
waving.

CAROLYN MOORE

Love Letter There's No Need to Mail

I've bought strange clothes, donated those you know.
I swizzle orange juice and Myers's rum
solely for me. Facing the usual risks—
fumble and breakage—I tickle an old vase
with a bottle brush to scuff off plant debris
from a crystal neck as tight as our excuses
all those years that failed to fit us right.
Who knew privacy's coat was just my size?

I am buffing letter openers, their brass dull
from disuse now that my thumbs itch to mug
envelopes. Burrow at their corners. Rip.
Brave paper cuts. I might read what's inside
or write to strangers by means of lists I leave
in public places to confound or charm
their finders. Spare lists, like "asparagus,
ant killer, fiery distraction, salt."

Or "duct tape, skeleton key, a pound of grace"—
trusting folks to find there what they seek,
to stumble on what suits or what's deserved.
These days, I tidy clutter and slough remains.
I am living hours that wouldn't wait for you.
This lanky season sprawling wide with time
to hoard or squander as solitude desires:
this interruption has become my life.

Doing Without

In the rain
the room
darkens

learning
to be still

practicing
the right thing
to do,
the art
of composure

before he
gets home
and finds you

wrestling
the burden
down
to the ground,

the burden
of doing
without

all
that cannot
save you.

The Culture of Narcisside

Having submitted a guilty plea to first-degree murder so as to avoid execution for murdering his wife, Robert Coulthard has recently been denied parole after serving twenty years in North Carolina's Pender Correctional Institution. Rob, described by police investigators as an "organized psychopath," slowly poisoned Sandy with arsenic, until, bloated and near death, she swallowed the lethal ice chips that Rob, posing as the caring husband, fed her in her hospital bed. Once Sandy had expired, Rob walked out into the hall and called his mistress on a pay phone.

Dr. Bill Sybers, a pathologist and county coroner from Panama City, Florida, pled guilty to manslaughter for injecting his fifty-two-year-old wife, Kay, with the untraceable drugs succinylcholine and potassium chloride, which, together, simulated a heart attack and caused her sudden death. By the time he submitted his plea, Sybers had long been remarried to Judy Ray, the woman with whom he was involved when Kay died.

Mark Winger almost escaped detection for beating to death his thirty-one-year-old wife, Donnah, while their three-month-old son slept upstairs at their home in Springfield, Illinois. Winger had set up a fall guy—Roger Harrington, a driver Donnah had hired a few weeks earlier to provide car service home from the airport. When Harrington answered Winger's summons to his house, Winger shot him twice, later telling police that he'd caught Harrington striking Donnah in the head with a ball and claw hammer. The community huddled around Mark Winger, grieving widower, single parent of an infant, and brave slayer of his wife's murderer. Soon, he married the baby's nanny, hired five months after Donnah's death. Six years later, Winger was indicted and, on the testimony of a neighbor with whom he'd had an affair while married to Donnah, is now serving a life sentence.

These three murders—and many more like them—form a subset of spousal murder defined chiefly by a husband's desire to escape at least one negative consequence of divorce, whether alimony, division of property, loss of child custody, or loss of stature in the community. Through a process of narcissistic rationalization, such husbands come to feel entitled to avoid the inconvenience and responsibility of ending a marriage, and that sense of entitlement, in turn, leads them to detach both morally and emotionally. Nothing and no one is, in the context of such detachment, as important as

what these husbands desire. They kill—and kill only once—with cold calculation, the *sine qua non* of narcisside. Afterwards, many of them move on calmly, remarrying, resettling, pursuing careers, establishing new families, and never again inflicting domestic violence.

How narcisside differs from other types of spousal murder, whether rage killing or killings prompted by the urge to control, is manifested in the three cases of Peterson, Peterson, and Peterson: Scott Peterson, the husband who in 2002 killed his pregnant wife, Laci, in Modesto, California; Michael Peterson, the author and local politician convicted in 2003 of hurling his wife, Kathleen Atwater, down the stairs of their Durham, North Carolina, mansion (as forensic experts now suspect him of doing to another woman, his friend Elizabeth Ratliff, years earlier in Germany); and Drew Peterson, the former police sergeant from Illinois, whose fourth wife, Stacy, disappeared in 2007 and who has been charged with killing his third wife, Kathleen Savio, in 2004.

Neither Michael nor Drew Peterson reveals the emotional detachment of Scott Peterson, who epitomizes narcisside: he was involved with another woman when he killed Laci; his approach to murder involved extensive, covert calculation and plotting; he was motivated to escape the responsibility that impending fatherhood was going to entail; and, after murdering his pregnant wife, he was instantly ready to move on. In contrast, Michael Peterson is apparently given to sporadic outbursts of rage that have likely resulted in two nearly identical murders of women to whom he was emotionally close: both were thrown down staircases. What triggers Michael Peterson's wrath isn't clear; prosecutors argued that Kathleen had discovered his penchant for male prostitutes, assignations with whom he scheduled on their home computer. In further contrast, Drew Peterson's rage is boiling constantly, just under the surface, erupting with murderous consequences. His second wife has reported that he abused her, and he has likely killed wives three and four.

Narcisside links its perpetrators through an uncanny myriad of shared traits that constitute not just a profile, but a predictive index. The most common characteristics, after unemotional and careful planning by the husband, are his white-collar status and his involvement with another woman at the time of the murder. As in the case of spousal murder in general, a new baby or one on the way especially jeopardizes the wife, even though some fathers commit narcisside expressly to retain child custody, rather than risk losing it in divorce court. A grievous number of these murders occur while children are in the house.

Although the narcissidal killer is highly intelligent and thus often able to elude immediate detection, the elaborate back story he constructs to explain the wife's murder often falls apart when examined closely, and his sometimes clumsy use of a 911 call to report the murder and to begin purveying his alibi raises suspicion. During the investigation, he is likely to call relatives and neighbors, asking if they know about any progress on the case, but actually trying to discover if he has become a suspect. His lack of emotional response to his spouse's murder, coupled with his avoidance of the wife's body and his excessive attention to his own emotional distress, provide additional litmus. Yet some narcissidal men can produce crocodile tears on demand and would seem to enjoy the consolation paid to the bereaved. These same men occasionally stage a wife's corpse in a humiliating position at the crime scene, perhaps to express contempt, perhaps to mislead authorities by implicating a lunatic criminal.

Prodigious intelligence also breeds arrogance—"monstrous arrogance," as one judge pronounced it when she sentenced attorney Michael Fletcher to life imprisonment. "In all my years on the bench," said Circuit Court Judge Jessica Cooper of Fletcher's having killed his wife, Leann, "I don't think I've ever seen a crime so incredibly cold-blooded or heartless." He'd shot her in the head and tried to make it appear a suicide. She was pregnant with their second child; he was sexually involved with another judge, Susan Chrzanowski, who was illegally assigning him cases that plumped his earnings. In this instance and others, arrogance leads to risk-taking, to confidence in the face of guilt, and eventually to over-reaching, with a whiff of catch-me-if-you-can.

A disproportionate number of men who commit narcisside being physicians, they often resort to poison, and they frequently order the wife's body cremated so as to prevent belated investigation into cause of death. Other physicians, like Boston's Dirk Greineder, know how to effect quick death with a knife, or, like plastic surgeon Robert Bierenbaum of Manhattan, how to dismember a body, pack it into a duffle bag, and drop the contents into the Atlantic Ocean from a rented Cessna, thus eliminating proof of death. Because of their education and enviable careers, narcissidal husbands have earned the respect of their community, which, even though a spouse is usually the first suspect in a wife's murder or disappearance, can place them above suspicion. More often than not, everything about them—their professions, their marriages, their families—seems storybook perfect. But these men are leading double lives, sometimes exploiting a mistress for social or professional advancement. Once the wife is excised from the family portrait,

moreover, the husband typically keeps his small children sequestered from their maternal grandparents.

Much as the violence of narcisside seems to arise unexpectedly, so does it seem a behavioral aberration so extreme and heinous as to be the exception. Though straining against the very margins of society, however, narcisside does not come out of nowhere. Rather, it is the culmination and logical extension of a narcissistic culture whose self-centeredness is pervasive to the point of hiding in plain sight. Whether the recent collapse of the U.S. financial structure, in which a greedy few took advantage of a multitude of trusting investors; the proliferation of iTechnology, which isolates individuals even as it coaxes their egos to expand; or the manipulation of the political system for self-serving ends, all such trends blatantly represent narcissism in contemporary American culture.

Some signs of this regrettable social condition are equal to narcisside in severity and scope—for example, one teenager's killing another for a pair of shoes. But other incarnations, though familiar enough, may not immediately seem related to cold-hearted murder. Take, for example, the impulses behind eating disorders. The intense focus on perfecting the self arises, we're often told, from marketing efforts to instill consumerist desire for goods promising a perfect appearance. That consumerist market, whose aim has been to stir up and unleash sub-conscious cravings since Edward Bernays invented public relations in post-World War I America, has targeted and hit teenage women's insecurities over being good and good-looking enough. Tapping into their competitiveness and thirst for control over something even so limited as their own bodies, the media have steered female adolescent attention toward the mirror (a frequent image in advertising), where it remains, like Eve's in *Paradise Lost*, until someone they recognize as more important than themselves can claim it from self-absorption. Mirrors come in other forms, including the proliferation of product variety on grocery shelves. Try finding the one item you want in rows of variations—orange juice, say, made from domestically grown fruit, without pulp and without additives like funny-tasting calcium. You'd better save enough time to comb shelf after refrigerated shelf for this elusive item or conserve effort by asking the stock person for assistance. These choices, dizzying in number and differing from one another so subtly as to appear redundant, are competing to reflect you. If the unscented, clear, nonstaining gel deodorant doesn't do it, then perhaps the unscented, clear, nonstaining stick deodorant will. The message: don't be satisfied with less than exactly what you want. Nor does the realm of writing remain untouched. Nonfiction having taken

over the better share of the commercial book market in recent years, the memoir flourishes like never before. To be sure, some offerings among the vast and seemingly endless supply artfully look beyond the self, indeed use the self to transport the reader toward something objectively momentous and engaging. But many memoirists appear to use nonfiction as Narcissus used the pool, as a means of self-regard. In what was surely one of the last pieces he wrote before his recent death, the guest editor's introduction to *The Best American Essays 2007*, David Foster Wallace has observed, "The sense I get from a lot of contemporary memoirs is that they have an unconscious and unacknowledged project, which is to make the memoirists seem as endlessly fascinating and important to the reader as they are to themselves."

Wallace's words unconscious and unacknowledged illuminate the crux at hand: narcisside is itself a mirror, bringing into view both our selves and ourselves. Like any mirror, it can act as a tool or a trap—a means of self-knowledge or of self-love. To think of unchecked egoism as alien to all but a few in our society is to misperceive the way we all live now and to underestimate our resemblance to the Rob Coulthards and Mark Wingers. It is to ignore who we are, much as the Danes in Beowulf take Grendel and his mother for creatures unlike themselves, rather than a projection of their own boundless appetite and anti-social impulses. To avoid that mistake, however, is to acknowledge our shared, communal agency in creating the conditions that make conceivable such an atrocity as narcisside and to understand that, although monsters may seem to dwell on society's borders, they in fact originate from within.

Strålände
for Garbo

The photographer who traced you,
month after month,
chafed when your fingers

subtracted your face.
The words you once intoned,
I want to be alone,

coursed like waves in his eardrums.
Strålände, those shimmering words
that slid off your tongue,

arpeggio of notes
sprinting across strings.
The unmistakable depth of your face—

chiseled stone that didn't blanch
or flinch
at the camera's glint,

perfectly angular in its arrangement.
You could wear
any clothes—

trousers, couture gowns, clogs.
Hands, lithe as a mime's.
Your voice—base cello.

Critics mocked you.
One cartoonist penciled
you into caricature—

strålände means "glorious" or "brilliant" in the Swedish language

you, a figure mouthing
one word—Ouch!
as a campfire blaze

spread beneath your foot.
Your foot dangled,
barely grazed by flames.

An assortment of men
loathed the lilt of your vowels,
shunned the tilt of your face.

What you gave the world
is a room steeped in your rhythm,
a voice when heard

little girls choose rumbas
over pirouettes.
Thanks to the wide arc of your gaze,

your movies arrest.
Like a prime perfume,
settle you into our skin.

To My Son Playing Rec Basketball

The play is 31: you rush out to set a pick
on a boy twice your size—they're all twice your size—
your hands fisted for protection, your chin
jutting out at his waistline. For a moment
he must think he's swatting a mosquito,
some pesky little critter, until you fall,
straight-legged, like the tree in the forest,
and the ref whistles the offensive foul.

How fast you run, my son, all arms and legs
as thin as twigs, your hair buzzed close,
ears sticking out like the wings of some small bird.
How joyfully you laugh, your successful feint
enabling two points: you, a boy whose head
your teammates rub for luck, who plays as though
every minute were the last, as though you see
the same thing I see, through the pentimento of time:
a baby, premature, incubated, intubated,
surrounded by the hushed voices
of neonatal intensive care, the hooded eyes
of nurses who, though more than kind,
promise nothing, not even a tomorrow.

Even as I watch you—point guard now—
evade your own defensive man to bank
a layup off the glass, I'm still blanketed
in layers of time: the way I held you,
ten years ago, ten minutes of every three hours
out of the incubator, as gingerly as one
holds a pale blue egg windblown from the nest,
fearful of the one unmindful move
that will crack the shell. Now you
cradle the ball at the foul line, eying

the hoop with a fierce scowl: three-point play.
You'd be embarrassed at my thoughts
if you knew them, impatient. *It's not*
how tall you are, you'd correct me,
It's how smart. And how fast.
Still, I hold my breath, watching
the basketball spin slowly as it arcs
away from your small hand.

Seuss on Cell

My pad, your pad,
it pad, iPad.
My pod, no God,
your god, iPod.
One tooth, two tooth,
Red tooth, bluetooth?

If Seuss had cell, would cell have Seuss?
Would Seuss feel need for techno-noose?
To eat green eggs from techno-goose?

Would tweets get looted or twits get dated
if Dr. Seuss was Twitter-pated?
Would Cat in Hat be Cat with Mac?
Thing One with App, Thing Two with Chat?

Could Horton hear Who,
if Specks don't Skype?
Could Grinch get bars
on Christmas night?
Can Lorax hands even type?
I hope they can to be all right.

Would Seuss be saddest
about our status?

Kid Noir

Clay Avenue, 1 a.m.:
single bulbs blear through rain,
bathing the taverns in blue steam--

haloes for men and women who might
return to their upstairs rentals,
wake in a room they can't define.

The car glides slow as breath
past these boxes of internal noise
inside which women did things, men

did things, she didn't know what.
She knows only that the Avenue
is always wet and white, and they are always

traveling home late from Sunday dinner out.
A man, her father, peers through
the blackening windshield,

the woman his wife nodding,
his children asleep
like collapsible toys in the backseat,

except for her, staring through wet
at the flickering neon, the shuttered windows.
In one pane only, a yellow lamp

stains the pink curtain gold. A shape--
a plant, a hat-rack, a man's head--not moving.
Chopped laugh as a door cracks

and a shadow slides out.
Storm sewers seep black mirrors
of oil. The climbing fire escapes

draw her eyes up where the city lights
spread like cotton candy
against the blanket of rain. But she

can't rise, trapped in this white car
with its white, sleeping babies,
with that man driving them all to bed.

to the suffocating steam
of bathwater running in the tub,
of whispering like termites

in every room, the chitter
of her brothers protesting in sleep.
When she is old, a woman,

she'll wear a black velvet hat
shapely as her mother's hand
with a handkerchief veil

tied with butterfly knots.
She will swoon into jazz music,
lose herself in smoke.

Insomnia

What keeps our bodies,
our blood coursing—
a maddening din, like midsummer
night insects, their pitched questions?

They blink or vibrate
two dumb syllables: alive, alive.
The circuits, the network, this web
of connections within our own body:

the map of this skin, this brain
teeming, no matter if you ask: to what purpose,
or beseech: be still.
It won't be.

Even in this familiar, unfathomable acre,
darkness pulsates, across my room,
beneath my cool skin,
uncharted as space or ocean's bottom,

evidence of worlds within worlds.
I lie alone, but not alone,
accompanied by that pulse
that rules until it chooses: peace, sleep.

Tijuana Crossing

There's a beat-up canopied pickup truck
crammed with men, stops a few miles out

from here hills underfoot
easier to hide, to slip through
around, under, get
to some other side

I can see you but you can't see me

Prayers said out into the canyon air down there
mingling with pinholes of dawn desert light

The deal with light is sometimes it's a consequence

And the problem with small spaces--pinholes, trucks
there's more--light, room--on the other side

Light can't be trusted

Lose a day like a limb

Accumulation
divisible by riddles:

I cannot even save
my own children

So I get them a dog
And I wash strawberries for breakfast
And we talk about wars and borders
And this is our circumstance

I know if I run my finger
along the filament
it will cut

JAY RUBIN

rondeau for three lovers

And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarah.

—Genesis 16:2

i.

let us climb to bed, my wife, though midnight's
lure of candle-lust renders few delights
at ninety, only blood and bones
still, our own breath cornerstones
our ancient song of semites

ii.

master, sir, I come tonight by your wife's
design, my pocket of eggs your long life's
legacy, not the catacombs...

...let us climb to bed

iii.

oh, my love, my gray-bearded groom, do not disguise
your passion for the dawn: raise your eyes
taste the day, swallow whole the plums
of spring: my own hands beat the drums
that render youth to appetize your thighs...

...let her claim our bed

Rapunzel at the Beach

Years have passed since her rescue,
now the Prince and Rapunzel
vacation at the shore.
Her long hair drags along bright sand
as black flies assault her ankles
and thighs. The Prince's hairy beer belly
protrudes over his Speedos.

The couple sits side by side
on low beach chairs, sipping
wine coolers and Budweiser,
no words sweep between them
as the foamy surf
creeps up their bare feet.

She wades into the ocean,
her long blonde hair adrift like
golden seaweed. Rapunzel searches
for escape, but there is no castle
wall to descend, only water
and more water, a tremendous ocean
where the other side
will never be visible,
and only disappointment swims
beneath the salty water, skimming her legs.

Unsold Lot #9

In the Eden by the side of my house,
hidden within four foot stalks
of savage weeds
is a small orchard,
June-ripe blueberries
half-covered
by honeysuckle webs.

We wonder who took the time
to plant that, care for it,
begin plans
only to abandon their slice
of cul-de-sac.

It does not matter
who or what or why.
These hedges are
here now, stretching
for sun, rooting
for water.

We discover, later,
they are called Climax.
We pick them, freeze some,
eat what's left,
and from our lips' and teeth's
telling stains, enjoy rich
mouthfuls of stolen gains.

Rhythm of a Swing

Two little feet rise and fall, rise and fall.
Like my heart.
She screams, "Harder daddy! Push me harder!"
She swings her feet forward,
pumping with all the energy her little body can muster.
Creak. Creak. Creak. Creak.
She squeals with delight as her father pushes her.
Him,
with that smile sliding from cheek to cheek, yelling as it goes.
Child,
who runs on white pebbles, climbs
monkey bars, hides behind a lucky tree.

I look down,
toeing the gravel with my shoes.
Creak. Creak.
The child's devious delight dwells in my heart, as I listen to
the rhythm of a swing.

His baby rocks in a cradle swing.
Mine lies, asleep for good.
She rises, she falls.
His baby makes a crescent moon between her cheeks.
His laughs and smiles and swings in a park.

Mine rests as a stone in the sea.

Postbellum

"Whore," a disheveled man muttered as he poured coffee from the pot of a beeping coffee maker into a US Airways Gold Club Member mug. He examined the hand holding the navy and gold mug, knuckles white with blue veins coming through the skin winding down to a gold ring on his fourth finger. He tightened his grip on the mug's handle and took a sip of the burning black coffee. He looked out the window at a driving rainstorm. Wind gusts whipped fat raindrops and tiny pellets of hail sideways against the house. The morning paper lay soaking on the lower part of the driveway, still wrapped in clear plastic. He turned from the rain-streaked window, walked across the white tiled floor, and sat at a small oak breakfast table. Several minutes passed with the man sipping from his mug.

He stood and walked to the refrigerator. The black appliance was adorned only by a few haphazardly placed magnets, a couple of take-out menus, and a single picture of the man and his wife walking arm in arm on a red carpet, dozens of cameramen in the background. Both appeared just younger than thirty. The pale, red-haired woman wore a cornflower blue, v-necked floor-length gown, the darker man a tailored black suit and a smile. She clutched his left arm with both hands as he held up his right in a wave.

He opened the refrigerator door and picked up a quart of milk. He unscrewed the lid, took a drink straight from the container, and placed it back on the shelf. Footsteps approached the kitchen from the direction of the living room, slippers steps on a tile floor.

He closed the door and turned just in time to see his wife enter the kitchen. Their eyes locked for a moment. She passed to the counter and emptied the last of the coffee into the plain white mug waiting for her on the marble-top. The amount left in the pot perfectly filled the mug to the brim. She set the pot back on the burner and flipped the switch to off.

The rain beat sideways against the window.

The man returned to the table and his coffee mug. He rubbed his temples as he sat down, studying the lines in the wooden tabletop.

His wife opened the fridge, picked up the same milk jug, splashed some into her coffee, and set it back on the shelf. She swirled the cup delicately until the black had dulled to a tan brown. She shut the door and set her mug on the table across from his. She lifted the glass lid off a danish-laden

cake platter, selected an apple and cream flavored one, and sat in the seat opposite her husband.

She looked hard at it as she ate, never setting it down between bites. The man stared at his coffee.

The rain was now a light but steady drizzle tapping outside the window. The hail had stopped. A car engine fired loudly from next-door and revved three times.

The man pushed back his chair and stood up and walked out the front door. The woman looked up after he was outside. She stood and walked to the window and watched her husband bending down to pick up the newspaper, the rain falling lightly on him. His long brown slicked-back hair turning a damper shade. His white t-shirt quickly soaking through. His lightly tanned skin darkening the drenched cotton. Plaid flannel pajama pants and pair of slippers shielding his long legs from the wind.

She saw him straighten and stare at the house next door, first in the direction of a silver Maserati pulling out of the garage. The woman began to breathe more quickly, eyes widening slightly. She watched the darkened figure of a man behind the wheel of the car lift two fingers off the steering wheel in a small wave and nod slightly at the husband. His gaze followed the car as it slithered along the curved street out of the neighborhood. She saw him look back at the house the driver had just left, not unlike his own, not unlike any other house lining the street. She watched as he tapped the newspaper, still in its plastic, against his thigh. He stood frozen in the rain.

She moved back to the table and sat down. She reached into the left-hand pocket of her maroon sweatpants and pulled out two shiny rings. Both were small and gold. The thinner of the two held an immaculate one-carat diamond. She rubbed the two against each other in circles between her thumb and forefinger. The diamond ring slipped onto her pointer finger down to the first knuckle. She held up the otherwise bare hand, slid it all the way onto her finger, and examined it in the faint light from the kitchen window. She took a bite of danish and chewed once before she swallowed. She pulled the ring off her finger and set both on the tabletop. Her pale hand trembled as her eyes filled with tears. She bit down on the danish again and looked up at the watery window before any tears could fall.

The door opened quietly. The soaked man trailed water through the kitchen as he walked past the table. He tossed the soggy newspaper onto the middle of the table in stride, his footsteps becoming quieter once he reached the living room carpet. His steps continued to fade until he reached the stairs, where they grew softer until they were overhead.

The woman stared at her cup of coffee, then at the shining gold rings lying on the table next to the mug. The woman picked up both rings again with her thumb and forefinger. The waxing light from the window glinted off the diamond. She watched it reflecting off the gold band. She dropped the rings into her coffee mug, took a small sip, and walked to the living room, leaving the half-eaten danish and mug of golden coffee on the table.

Her footsteps echoed as she walked into the living room and up the stairs. A door opened, then shut. A second set of footsteps began above and grew louder and lower until they leveled out. The man stepped back onto the tile floor of the kitchen. He now wore khakis and a polo shirt. He walked over to the table and shoved the rest of the danish into his mouth. He chewed the large bite slowly. He picked up the half-empty mug and walked over to the sink. He tipped it and the lukewarm liquid splattered in the stainless steel sink until the two rings clanged softly.

The man rinsed the remnants of brown liquid off the mug, and picked up a towel to dry it. He set the white mug on the counter next to the sink and looked at the rings. He turned the cold-water knob and watched the tarnishing brown wash off before the shiny rings slid down the drain's open mouth.

Steps sounded overhead and moved toward the stairs. He looked up and then out the drying window. The clouds were dissipating and light rays had begun to beam through the kitchen window.

She moved quickly from the living room into the kitchen, her high-heels clacking on the tile. She set down a large bag and looked at her husband. He turned and stared out the window.

She slung the bag over her right shoulder and walked to the front door. Light flooded the kitchen as she opened the door and stepped over the welcome mat into the shining sun.

Luck

The horseshoe, rusted,
is tacked by a ten-penny nail
above the barn door.
It is full of luck,
like a woman's legs
curved around a man
in a lucky moment of lust.

A chestnut colt, fenced
in the paddock, threw
the shoe on the track
and hobbled home, four
feet in an uneven gait.

The farrier sweated
a new shoe groomed
to the trotter's hoof.
He hammered it
in the breath of fire,
fixed the bent metal
in the hiss of cold water.

For months the abandoned
shoe hid in brown weeds
beneath the inside fence
of the dirt oval
until rescued as a charm.

For the chestnut, now shod,
the race begins again,
and the symbol of the lust
for luck arcs his steady gait.

2 A.M.

The stoplights cast hued light
into misty nothingness,
colored bulbs issuing
soft clicks into the early morning air.
Deserted lanes lead to
quiet houses,
shutters closed in deep sleep.
Streetlights and a dotted sky
make glowing patchworks
of the still puddles below them.
No ripples. No dances.
Tiny mirrors that reflect an empyreal gleam.
Not a whisper can be heard
for even the wind needs to catch its breath.

My bedside window feeds
night's stillness into my room.
I take it in like
a starry drink,
full of lightness but heavy on the stomach.
I feel alive, empowered.

The world slumbers on a
soundless pillow,
yet I stay awake.

Hands

Tears glide down my cheeks,
wiped away by my hands.
Silenced by your complacency,
my tears have no voice.

Salty water molecules
bitter—being forgotten—
abandoned by your gaze.

Dried by my hand,
I cleaned my mess
that you helped create
but you will never know.

And my hands
will never be
completely dry.

Immunology

You made it so easy to stop,
as simple as refusing a single gift.

The next time you came
longing for love,

my body vomited,
purged you from my pores,

scraped your bits from my bones
and walls, repainted deep red.

Red does not forgive.
My thighs crossed you out,

despite my calves flexed need.
My body turned against you.

Piece by piece. Ligaments, muscles,
nerves all protesting. Only the heart,

that traitorous organ, still
whispered your name.

Breathed you into the blood
where the antibodies

quashed the infection.

Reconstructing the Whale

First the frame of the beast,
bits of clasp from Victorian corsets
old buggy whips and carriage springs.

Next rows of mother-of-pearl teeth
from discarded oyster shells,
and a pair of reclaimed tuna eyes.

Then meat from an Inuit hunter
placed carefully over new bones
and covered with layers of satin.

Last, through the crafted blowhole
jewel-clear oil from old lanterns
and melted candle wax.

In the face of a hurricane,
resurrect the sleeping giant
on the shore of a coal-black sea.

Our Treasure

My dad combed curbs
for trash. He stopped for pop cans
he called *nickels*. He mended knees
of jeans, bought discount
bread to stack in the freezer.

Weekends I was put to work
with red paint and a wheelbarrow.
I had to sand boards for shelves
and push the manual lawn mower.
My Sunday post was lookout
as he shoveled dregs from city privies.

He garaged a fatherland of scrap wood,
rakes without handles, handles without
spades, and chairs with split seats.
His brown truck cruised
blocks the eve of pick-up day.
As sidekick, I folded my arms.

But now, I bike slow along junk bins,
a midweek pauses for a find.
My basket half-full, a list of needs
unmet. My home a collection of free
couches, desks, blankets. Oh!
My stray cats and divided flowers.

So much is thrown away.
These treasures of white trash.

When y is an Unknown

In math, the desks are in quads
that face inward where you work
in groups, but more often alone
with triangles and postulates on space.

How much water does the school pool hold?
What is the area of the blacktop?
Everything must be a symbol,
a stand-in for something else.

You sit with your book of shapes
while the teacher with the blond curls
convinces you, by the grade you earn
that you know nothing of numbers.

After class you go to lunch, pinch
quarters and dimes and count out the cost
of one diet Mountain Dew and maybe
a fifteen cent cherry Jolly Rancher stick.

When you get home and open your books,
where you store your twenty dollar bills,
you count them. Usually they're all there
in crisp piles of twos and threes,

but sometimes one or two is missing.
It doesn't matter how many times you recheck
your work.

The symbol which equals
your part-time job at the nursing home

has been converted into the volume
of beer bottles, now empty by the kitchen sink,
and the weight of ash in the resin bowl.

Though you try, again and again, for y,
you prove nothing, even with the theorems.

Memorial Gardens

Your last gift to me, nine rose bushes spaced evenly against a retaining wall, I have expanded into three hundred and sixty degrees of gardens surrounding our home.

Straight lines and sharp angles are softened now with winding paths, curved stone walls, a circular opening left in a concrete patio for a Japanese maple and a small pagoda.

A shady space beneath the deck nurtures hellebores and hostas, oxalis, amaryllis, and ferns. Nearby our wedding arch hangs heavy with Carolina jasmine.

In sunny spots begonias, dahlias, heather, hibiscus, gladiolas, marigolds, zinnias, daylilies, verbena, and clematis riot among themselves in a contest for color.

A white alcove planted with angel trumpets and Casablanca lilies, bordered in sweet lavender, exudes peace and tranquility. There's rosemary for remembrance lemon balm for healing, and thyme; a time to mourn and a time to be comforted.

In my gardens I have redefined
myself. I have shaken my fist at
God and stared Him in the face
of a David Austin rose.
In my gardens I have learned
to be still and know.

HEATHER WYATT

Wedding in Cumberland County, Tennessee

My uncle's toothpick
hung from his mouth
as he walked my cousin
Marie down the aisle.

His chest hair peeked
above his leather vest
and his round belt buckle
shone bright above his
black Wrangler jeans.

Aunt Freddie,
a padded box
in baby pink
was the hostess
on the mountain
that day.

Under the tent
at the reception
I let the white
bread and pimento
cheese rest in my
cheeks before
swallowing.

I stood in front
of the box fan
and watched
as my Grandma
shook hands,
thinking about
the long drive
back home.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

KATHY ACKERMAN grew up in Northwest Ohio but has lived in the Carolinas since 1984. She has published three poetry chapbooks: *The Time It Takes* (Finishing Line Press); *Crossbones and Princess Lace* (NCWN Mary Belle Campbell Poetry Chapbook Award); and *Knock Wood* (Main Street Rag) as well as a critical biography of Olive Tilford Dargan, *The Heart of Revolution* (University of Tennessee Press). She earned a doctorate in American literature from the University of South Carolina and is now a Writer-in-Residence and the Dean of Arts and Sciences at Isothermal Community College in Spindale. Ackerman resides in Tryon, North Carolina.

KATIE AXELSON is a senior English and Spanish major at Gardner-Webb University. From Racine, Wisconsin, Axelson is the editor of The English Channel, the Department of English Language and Literature's official newsletter. This is her first publication.

SUSAN AYLWORTH is Professor Emeritus of English at California State University, Chico, where she taught for 30 years. A wife of 40 years, mother of seven children, and author of eight novels, Aylworth loves poems, plays, words in almost all forms, and good raspberry jam. She lives in northern California with her husband, Roger, a dog called Pirate, and two quirky cats. Like most women of her generation, Aylwroth wishes the grandkids would visit more often.

CHRISTINE BATES wrote "The Night I Killed the Devil" based on her own childhood experience of dealing with divorcing parents. She received a master's degree in English from East Carolina University in 2002. Bates has taught English at East Carolina University, Pitt Community College, and she serves currently as the Program Chair of English at Lenoir Community College. Bates lives in Winterville, North Carolina, with her husband, Andy, and daughter, Abby.

PETER BERGQUIST earned a bachelor's degree in English from Princeton University and an M.F.A. in creative writing from Antioch University Los Angeles. He is currently teaching English, film, and academic decathlon in the Los Angeles Unified School District. His poems have been published in the *Broad River Review*, *The New Verse News*, *The Chickasaw Plum*, *The Sylvan Echo*, *The Two Hawks Quarterly*, *The Sea Stories Project* of the Blue

Ocean Institute, *Motif v2: Come What May*, *The Queen City Review*, *Milk Money*, and *The Pennsylvania Literary Journal*. His poem "Roosevelt" was named Runner-Up in the Chistell Writing Contest. Berquist's poem "Gristle on the Bone" was a finalist for the Rash Award in Poetry and is published in this edition of the *Broard River Review*.

LOUIS BOURGEOIS is the Executive Director of VOX Press. His memoir, *The Gar Diaries*, was nominated for the National Book Award in 2008. He lives, writes, and edits in Oxford, Mississippi.

BILL BROWN just retired as a part-time lecturer at Vanderbilt University. He has authored five poetry collections, three chapbooks and a textbook. His three current collections are *The News Inside* (Iris Press 2010), *Late Winter* (Iris Press 2008) and *Tatters* (March Street Press 2007). Recent work appears in *Prairie Schooner*, *Tar River Poetry*, *English Journal*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Connecticut Review*, *Atlanta Review*, *Asheville Poetry Review*, and *Southern Humanities Review*.

CAROL CARPENTER'S poems and stories have appeared in numerous online and print publications, including *Barnwood International Poetry Magazine*, *The Pedestal*, *Orbis*, and *Quddity*. Her work has been exhibited by art galleries and produced as podcasts (*Connecticut Review* and *Bound Off*). Carpenter's chapbook, *The Empress of Patton Avenue*, will appear online at Heartsounds Press in April 2011. She received the Hart Crane Memorial Award, the Jean Siegel Pearson Poetry Award, and an Artists Among Us Award, among others. Carpenter lives in Michigan.

CATHERINE CARTER was born on the eastern shore of Maryland and raised there by wolves and vultures. Carter now lives near Cullowhee, North Carolina, where she coordinates the English education program at Western Carolina University. Her first full-length collection, *The Memory of Gills* (LSU, 2006) received the 2007 Roanoke-Chowan Award from the North Carolina Literary and Historical Association. Her work has also appeared in or is forthcoming from *Poetry*, *Orion*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, and *Best American Poetry 2009*, among others. Carter's next volume of poetry, *The Swamp Monster at Home*, is forthcoming from LSU Press in Spring 2012.

JESSIE CARTY'S writing has appeared in publications such as *MARGIE*, *decomp*, and *Connotation Press*. She is the author of two poetry chapbooks,

At the A & P Meridiem (Pudding House 2009) and *The Wait of Atom* (Folded Word 2009), as well as a full-length poetry collection, *Paper House* (Folded Word 2010). Carty teaches at Rowan-Cabarrus Community College in Concord, North Carolina. She is also the photographer and editor for *Referential Magazine*. Carty can be found at <http://jessiecarty.com>, where she blogs about from housework to the act of blogging itself.

ELIZABETH CASHWELL is a senior English education major at Gardner-Webb University. She plans to teach high school English and eventually attend graduate school. Cashwell spent the last two summers in the Dominican Republic, enjoys reading, writing, and watching episodes of the original television show, *Get Smart*. This is Cashwell's second appearance in the *Broad River Review*.

MELISSA CASTILLO-GARROW is currently pursuing a master's degree in English with a concentration in creative writing at Fordham University. She was awarded the Sonoran Prize for Creative Writing at Arizona State University and was a finalist for Crab Orchard Review's 2009 Charles Johnson Student Fiction Award. Recent publications include *Shaking Like a Mountain* and *A Daughter's Story*, a new anthology. Her first novel, *Pure Bronx*, will be published in April 2010 by Augustus Publications. Castillo-Garrow has also been published in *Latin Beat Magazine*, *El Diario/La Prensa*, and *The Bilingual Review*, among others.

SHARON CHARDE, a retired family therapist, has won many poetry awards and been published in over thirty-five journals and anthologies of poetry, including *Calyx*, *The Paterson Review*, *Rattle*, *Poet Lore*, and *The New Delta Review*, and has been nominated six times for a Pushcart Prize. Charde has also edited and published *I Am Not A Juvenile Delinquent*, containing the work of the adjudicated teenaged females she has volunteered with since 1999 at a residential treatment center in Litchfield, Connecticut. She has two first prize-winning chapbooks, *Bad Girl At The Altar Rail* and *Four Trees Down from Ponte Sisto*, and a full-length collection, *Branch In His Hand* (Backwaters Press, 2008), which is being adapted by the BBC as a radio drama to be broadcast in 2012.

MICHAEL CHIN is lives in Baltimore, Maryland, where he works full-time with a program for gifted children while pursuing a graduate degree in writing at Johns Hopkins University. He has previously published work in *The Floorboard Review* and *Stymie Magazine*.

KEVIN MARSHALL CHOPSON received his M.F.A. from Murray State University. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *REAL: Regarding Arts and Letters*, *The Baltimore Review*, *Number One*, *English Journal*, *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Generations*, *New Madrid*, *Concho River Review*, *The South Carolina Review*, *San Pedro River Review*, *Tipton Poetry Journal*, *Chiron Review*, *Poem*, *Nashville Arts Magazine*, *the Aurorean*, and the *National Gallery of Writing*, among others. He teaches writing at Davidson Academy and Volunteer State Community College, both just north of Nashville, Tennessee.

DON COLBURN is a freelance journalist and poet in Portland, Oregon. He has published three collections of poems, most recently a chapbook titled *Because You Might Not Remember*. A longtime newspaper reporter for *The Washington Post* and *The Oregonian*, and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in feature writing, he has an M.F.A. in creative writing from Warren Wilson College. His poems have appeared in magazines such as *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *The Iowa Review*, *Ploughshares*, *Poetry Northwest*, and *Southern Poetry Review*.

THOMAS RAIN CROWE is an internationally recognized author whose work has been published in several languages. As a poet, translator, editor, publisher, and freelance writer, he is the author of thirty books of original works, including *Rare Birds: Conversations With Music Legends* and the multi-award winning book of nonfiction *Zoro's Field: My Life in the Appalachian Woods* (University of Georgia Press, 2005). As an editor, he has been an instrumental force behind such magazines as *Beatitude*, *Katuhah Journal* and the *Asheville Poetry Review*. He has translated the work of such prominent writers as Hafiz, Guillevic, and Yvan Goll. He is founder and publisher of New Native Press. His literary archives have been purchased and are collected by the Duke University Special Collections Library. Crowe lives in the Tuckasegee community in rural western North Carolina.

JULIA NUNNALLY DUNCAN'S latest book, *At Dusk*, a poetry collection, was released by Old Seventy Creek Press in 2010. Recent journal publications include poems in *Audience*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, *Fresh*, and *Western North Carolina Woman*. March Street Press, which published Duncan's poetry collection *An Endless Tapestry* and her second novel *When Day Is Done*, will rerelease her first novel *Drops of the Night* in 2011. Duncan lives in Marion, North Carolina, with her husband Steve, a woodcarver, and their twelve-year-old daughter Annie. For twenty-five years, Duncan has been an English instructor at McDowell Technical Community College.

JOANNA ELEFTHERIOU grew up in Flushing, New York. She studied English and Modern Greek literature at Cornell University and creative writing at Old Dominion University. Currently a doctoral student in literature and creative writing at the University of Missouri, she's at work on a collection of essays about her life in Cyprus. Eleftheriou's essays, short stories, and translations appear in *Neaskopos*, *Apalachee Review*, *Chautauqua*, and *Crab Orchard Review*.

TERRI KIRBY ERICKSON, a North Carolina native, is the award-winning author of three books of poetry, including *Telling Tales of Dusk* (Press 53, 2009), and *In the Palms of Angels* (Press 53, 2011). Her poems and essays have been published in numerous literary journals, online and print magazines, anthologies, and other publications, including *The Christian Science Monitor*, *JAMA*, *North Carolina Literary Review*, and *Verse Daily*, and her poems have been nominated for the Pushcart Prize and the Best of the Net Award. For more information, visit <http://terrikirbyerickson.wordpress.com>.

J. LAUREN FLETCHER is a 2011 graduate of Gardner-Webb University with a bachelor's degree in English with a creative writing emphasis. Originally from Chesterfield, Virginia, she has published poetry, nonfiction, and photography in *Mindscapes Art and Literary Magazine* and the *Broad River Review*. Fletcher is currently working on her first novel.

ELIZABETH FOGLE, originally from North Carolina and after a long delay in Georgia, now lives in Erie, Pennsylvania, where she teaches in the English program at Penn State Erie, the Behrend College. Fogle has poems published and forthcoming in *The Broken Plate*, *Harpur Palate*, *Nimrod*, *Tidal Basin Review*, and *Tusculum Review*.

STAN GALLOWAY teaches writing and literature at Bridgewater College in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. His poetry has appeared online at *vox poetica*, *Loch Raven Review*, *Caper Literary Journal*, *Eunoia Review*, *The Atrium*, and *Apollo's Lyre*. In print, his poems have been published in *Midnight Zoo*, the *Burroughs Bulletin*, *WestWard Quarterly*, and the book *Edgar Rice Burroughs: The Second Century*. His book of literary criticism, *The Teenage Tarzan*, came out in 2010 (McFarland). Gallway received his master's degree with a creative thesis from Kansas State University and his doctorate with a creative dissertation from the University of Kansas.

TYLER GOBBLE is stoked about something. He is blog editor of *The Collagist*, lead poetry editor of *The Broken Plate*, and a contributor for Vouched Books. Gobble's work has appeared recently in *Everyday Genius*, *Metazen*, and *Smalldoggies Magazine*, among other places.

SARAH GORDON, longtime editor of *The Flannery O'Connor Bulletin* and founding editor of the *Flannery O'Connor Review*, chaired five O'Connor symposia at O'Connor's alma mater, Georgia College in Milledgeville. Gordon is the author of *Flannery O'Connor: The Obedient Imagination* (UGA Press, 2000) and *A Literary Guide to Flannery O'Connor's Georgia* (UGA Press, 20008). She is a widely published poet, including appearances in *Georgia Review*, *Southern Exposure*, *Apalachee Quarterly*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and *Shenandoah*. Her collection of poems, *Distances*, appeared in 1999. Gordon lives in Athens, Georgia.

PETER D. GOODWIN divides his time between the streets and vibrant clutter of New York City and the remnants of the natural world along Maryland's Chesapeake Bay. Born in New Jersey, raised in Jersey, Virginia, England, worked in Asia, England, and New York, Goodwin's work has appeared in various anthologies and journals, including *September eleven*, *Maryland Voices*, *Listening to The Water: The Susquehanna Water Anthology*, *Alternatives to Surrender*, *Rattle*, *Scribble*, *Memoir(and) Dreamstreets*, *River Poets Journal*, *Delaware Poetry Review*, *Yellow Medicine Review*, *Whistling Fire*, and *Loch Raven Review*.

JENNIFER HART is a senior studio art major at Gardner-Webb University. A previous winner of the *Broad River Review* Editors' Prize in Poetry, Hart's artwork now appears on the cover. From Gastonia, North Carolina, Hart will graduate in May 2011.

EMILY HAYES received her master's degree in English literature from Southern Illinois University, Carbondale. She teaches at Carbondale Community High School and is co-editor of *The Village Pariah*. Her works have appeared in various journals, including *Compass Rose*, *Paterson Literary Review*, *Review Americana*, and previous issues of the *Broad River Review*.

TABITHA HIBBS earned an M.F.A. in poetry from McNeese State University in 2005. Her poetry has been published in *Words, Words, Words: MSU Department of Languages Alumni Magazine* and in *The Arena: A Collection of Literary and Artistic Expression*. Hibbs is currently a doctoral candidate in English at the University of Tulsa, where she serves as the Book Review Editor at the *James Joyce Quarterly*.

JANE HICKS, a native of East Tennessee, is an award-winning poet and quilter. Her first book, *Blood and Bone Remember: Poems from Appalachia* (Jesse Stuart Foundation, 2005) met with popular and critical acclaim, winning the Appalachian Writers Association Poetry Book of the Year. Her poetry has appeared in numerous journals and literary magazines in the Southeast, notably *Wind, Now & Then, Appalachian Journal, Appalachian Heritage, Nantahala Review, and Shenandoah*.

EMMANUEL JAKPA was born in Warri, Nigeria, and currently lives in Ireland. His poetry has been published widely, including *The Diagram, Land- ing Places, Echoing Years, Barnwood*, and *Edison Literary Review*. Jakpa has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize three times, and he received the 2008 Yeat's Pierce Loughran Award.

JAMES A. JORDAN, from just north of Nashville, Tennessee, is currently an undergraduate student at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. He was the recipient of the 2010 Cantrell Prize and was a first runner-up for the 2009 Flo-Gault Poetry Prize. Jordan has also spent time studying in London.

JULIET KERICO, a graduate student in creative writing at Southern Illinois University-Edwardsville, holds a master's degree in literature and film from Case Western Reserve University and a master's degree in library science from the University of Illinois. Her work has appeared in *OVS Magazine* and *Interrobang! Magazine*. In addition to reading and writing poetry, she also serves as the Science and Health Sciences Librarian in Lovejoy Library on the campus of SIU-Edwardsville. Kerico's first poetry chapbook, *Live Girls*, is forthcoming (dancing girl press, 2013).

ALAN KING is a poet and journalist living in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area. His poems have appeared in *Alehouse, Audience, Boxcar Poetry Review, Indiana Review, MiPoessas, and RATTLE*, among others. King is also the senior program director at the DC Creative Writing Workshop, a Cave Canem fellow, VONA Alum, and M.F.A. candidate at the University of Southern Maine's Stonecoast program. He's been nominated for both a Best of the Net selection and Pushcart Prize, and his first collection of poems, *Drift*, is forthcoming next year (Willow Books, 2012). Find out more about King on his blog at <http://alanwking.wordpress.com>.

COURTNEY N. KING is an English major and sociology minor at Gardner-Webb University, where she plans to graduate in August 2011. She is from

Lawndale, North Carolina, where she has the opportunity to write for her church's district newsletter. King also writes monthly pieces for Gardner-Webb's Department of English newsletter, *The English Channel*. She has twice placed in the local Erma Drum Poetry Contest, and her ultimate goal is simply to make her writing available to willing readers. King's work has appeared previously in the *Broad River Review*.

CYNTHIA LEWIS, Charles A. Dana Professor of English at Davidson College, regularly publishes creative nonfiction, much of it on American culture, as well as literary scholarship on early modern English drama. Lewis is currently writing a book about sports and Shakespeare.

ELLARAINÉ LOCKIE is a widely published and awarded poet, nonfiction book author, and essayist. Her seventh chapbook, *Stroking David's Leg*, was awarded Best Individual Collection for 2010 from *Purple Patch* magazine in England, and her eighth chapbook, *Red for the Funeral*, won the 2010 San Gabriel Poetry Festival Chapbook Contest. Her forthcoming chapbook, *Wild as in Familiar*, will be released from Finishing Line Press later this year. Ellaraine teaches both poetry/writing and papermaking workshops and serves as poetry editor for the lifestyles magazine, *Lilipoh*.

LAURA LOMAX was born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, and educated at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Lomax is a practicing physician, wife, and mother of two.

HELEN LOSSE is the author of two books, *Seriously Dangerous* (Main Street Rag, 2011) and *Better With Friends* (Rank Stranger Press, 2009) and two chapbooks, *Gathering the Broken Pieces* and *Paper Snowflakes*. Her recent poetry publications include *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Iodine Poetry Review*, *Blue Fifth Review*, *The Pedestal Magazine*, *ken*again*, and *Literary Trails of the North Carolina Piedmont*. She lives in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and is the Poetry Editor for the online literary magazine *The Dead Mule School of Southern Literature*.

DENTON LOVING lives on a farm near the historic Cumberland Gap, where Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia come together. He works at Lincoln Memorial University, where he co-directs the annual Mountain Heritage Literary Festival. Other fiction, poetry, and reviews have appeared or are forthcoming in *Birmingham Arts Journal*, *Appalachian Journal*, *Munnetonka Review*, *Main Street Rag*, *Plain Spoke*, and in numerous anthologies, including *Degrees of Elevation: Stories of Contemporary Appalachia*.

MARSHA MATHEWS' chapbook, *Sunglow & A Tuft of Nottingham Lace*, won the Red Berry Editions Chapbook Award and will be released in 2011. Last year, her first book of poems, *Northbound Single Lane*, was published by Finishing Line Press. Magazines that have published Mathews' work include *Apalachee Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Fourth River*, *Greensboro Review*, *Hampden Sydney Poetry Review*, *Kansas Quarterly*, *Melusine*, and *Pembroke Magazine*. Her poems also appear in the anthologies *Child of My Child* (Gelles-Cole Literary Enterprises, 2010) and *Touching: Poems of Love, Longing, and Desire* (Fearless Books, 2011). Mathews teaches writing at Dalton State College, in Dalton, Georgia, where she advises the campus literary magazine, *Tributaries*.

CAROLYN MOORE'S poetry has garnered over eighty awards and honors, including the *New Millennium Writing Prize*, the Foley Poetry Award, and the C. Hamilton Bailey Fellowship from Literary Arts, Inc. Her three chapbooks each won their respective competitions, and her first book, *Instructions for Traveling Light*, is pending publication as the winner of Deep Bowl Press's competition. After a long stint of teaching at Humboldt State University (Arcata, California), Moore at last ekes out a living as a freelance writer and researcher working from the last vestige of the family farm in Tigard, Oregon.

CARIDAD MORO'S poetry has appeared in numerous journals and anthologies, including *The Comstock Review*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *MiPoesias*, *The Seattle Review*, *Slipstream*, *Spillway*, *CALYX*, *The Pedestal*, *Fifth Wednesday Review*, *The Lavender Review*, and many others. She is the recipient of a Florida Individual Artist Fellowship in poetry, and thrice nominated for a Pushcart Prize. Her award-winning chapbook *Visionware* is available from Finishing Line Press.

GRACE C. OCASIO'S poetry has appeared in *Rattle*, *Earth's Daughters*, and *Court Green*. She has poems forthcoming in *Obsidian III* and *Mythium*. Her chapbook, *Hollerin from This Shack*, was published by Ahadada Books. She completed a residency at Marilyn Nelson's Soul Mountain Retreat in East Haddam, Connecticut. Ocasio is a member of the North Carolina Writers' Network, the North Carolina Poetry Society, the Carolina African American Writers' Collective, and the Charlotte Writers' Club.

ANNE BRITTING OLESON is a writer and teacher who lives in the mountains of Central Maine with her family. She has published two chapbooks,

The Church of St. Materiana (2007) and *The Beauty of It* (2010). Oleson is a founding member of Simply Not Done, a women's reading, writing and teaching collective.

MATT ORTH is blessed to thrive in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, where he lives with his wife, two daughters, mother-in-law, and a vast menagerie of animals ranging from hedgehogs to tortoises. He works with Crossroads Worldwide Ministries and Broad River Community Church and constantly jots down ideas to write about that may never get written.

JAN B. PARKER, an artist and writer, lives with her husband in Fuquay-Varina, North Carolina, where she's currently working on *EmLee*, her second novel, and seeking publication for her first, *Trading Moons*. Parker's work is published in the 2009 Press 53 Open Awards Anthology, *Main Street Rag*, *MoonShine Review*, *Lit Snack*, *Grey Sparrow Journal*, and *What Doesn't Kill You* (another Press 53 anthology). Her awards include Honorable Mention in the 2010 Lorian Hemingway Short Story Competition; Second Place in the 2011 Southern Writers' Symposium Emerging Writers' Competition; and Finalist in the *Broad River Review's* 2010 Rash Award in Fiction. For more information, visit www.writerjanbparker.com.

MARY ELIZABETH PARKER'S poetry collections include the decidedly not X-rated *The Sex Girl* (Urthona Press), and two chapbooks, *Breathing in a Foreign Country* (Paradise Press) and *That Stumbling Ritual* (Coraddi Press, University of North Carolina at Greensboro). Her poems have appeared in many journals, including *Notre Dame Review*, *Gettysburg Review*, *New Letters*, *Arts & Letters*, *Confrontation*, *Madison Review*, *Phoebe*, *Birmingham Review*, *Passages North*, *New Millennium Writings*, *Greensboro Review* (nominated for a Pusheart Prize), and in *Earth and Soul*, an anthology published in English and Russian in the Kostroma region of Russia.

KRISTEN STABY REMBOLD'S poetry has appeared in *Appalachia*, *Blue-line*, *Crab Orchard Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *Literary Mama*, *New Ohio Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, and other journals. Her novel, *Felicity*, was published by Mid-List Press.

KIRSTEN RIAN'S poetry and nonfiction have appeared in numerous international literary journals and anthologies, including *Daylight*, *Rhino*, and *Upstreet*. She was recently nominated for inclusion in *Best New Poets*. Rian

has authored two anthologies and is frequently a featured reader or lecturer, appearing recently for Oregon Humanities, Portland Center Stage, and Friends of William Stafford. Also an independent photography curator and writer, she has coordinated more than 375 exhibitions, and served as picture editor or writer for 75 books/catalogues. She teaches writing at institutions and workshops throughout the Pacific Northwest, as well as internationally.

NIKKI RAYE RICE is from Hickory, North Carolina, and will complete her undergraduate studies in English with creative writing emphasis at Gardner-Webb University in May 2011. She has won the *Broad River Review's* Editors' Prize in Fiction with her story "Porch Spider," as well as Second Place in North Carolina's College Media Awards for the same story. Rice will enroll in Duke University's Divinity School to pursue a master's degree in divinity with a certificate in gender studies, theology, and ministry.

JAY RUBIN teaches writing at the College of Alameda in the San Francisco Bay Area. He holds an M.F.A. in poetry from New England College and lives in San Francisco, where he has published *Alehouse*, an all-poetry literary journal, at www.alehousepress.com.

MAUREEN A. SHERBONDY is an award-winning poet and fiction writer whose poetry titles include *After the Fairy Tale* (Main Street Rag Publishing Company, 2007), *Praying at Coffe Shops* (2008), which won the 2009 Next Generation Indie Book Award, and *Weary Blues* (Big Table Publishing Company, 2010). Main Street Rag also published Sherbondy's short story collection, *The Slow Vanishing* (2009). Sherbondy's latest chapbook, *Scar Girl*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. For more information, visit www.maureensherbondy.com.

M. E. SILVERMAN moved from New Orleans to Georgia and teaches at Gordon College, with work appearing in *Crab Orchard Review*, *32 Poems*, *Chicago Quarterly Review*, *Tapestry*, *The Southern Poetry Anthology*, *The Los Angeles Review*, *Mizmor L'David Anthology: The Shoah*, *Cloudbank*, *Pacific Review*, *Broad River Review*, *Sugar House Review*, and other magazines. M. E. Silverman was a finalist for the 2008 New Letters Poetry Award, the 2008 DeNovo Contest, and the 2009 Naugatuck River Review Contest.

LOGAN SIMPSON is a junior English major at Gardner-Webb University. Born in Sarasota, Florida, Simpson grew up in Boiling Springs, North Carolina. This is his first publication.

SAXON SIMPSON is a senior English major at Gardner-Webb University, where he has been a member of the men's varsity swim team for four years. This is his first publication.

AMY SNYDER, from Winston-Salem, North Carolina, is a sophomore English major with a creative writing emphasis at Gardner-Webb University. With minors in history and classical languages as well, Snyder intends to be both an elementary school teacher and a fiction writer. In her spare time, she enjoys reading the Brother Cadfael Chronicles and riding horses. This is her first publication.

JO BARBARA TAYLOR lives in Raleigh, North Carolina. Her poems have appeared in *Bay Leaves*, *Ibbetson Street*, *Broad River Review*, *Bee Culture*, and on *New Verse News*, as well as included in the anthologies *The Sound of Poets Cooking*, *Exit 109*, *You Gotta Love 'Em*, and *Words*. Her chapbook *One or Two Feathers* was released in 2010 by Plan B Press of Alexandria, Virginia.

ELIZABETH VAN HALSEMA is a sophomore English major from Charlotte, North Carolina. Van Halsema is a member of the women's vastiry swim team at Gardner-Webb University, which serves as her passion outside of school. She loves music, books, writing, and all things learnable. This is her first publication.

COLLYN WARNER will graduate from Gardner-Webb University in May 2011 with bachelor degrees in English and social sciences. Warner is from Shelby, North Carolina, and will attend the University of Alabama to pursue a master's degree in composition, rhetoric, and English studies. She is passionate about social justice issues, and enjoys spoken word poetry and drinking coffee.

ALLISON WILKINS is a graduate of the University of Nevada Las Vegas International M.F.A. program. Her poems have appeared in or are forthcoming with *STILL*, *Broken Bridge Review*, *The Georgetown Review*, *Tiger's Eye*, *hotmetalpress*, and others. Her article "'through the beautiful red': The Use of the Color Red as the Triple-Goddess in Sylvia Plath's *Ariel*" was published with Plath Profiles (August 2010). She currently lives in Virginia with her husband and two dogs. She is an assistant professor of English and associate editor of the James Dickey Review at Lynchburg College.

JEFFREY T. WILLIAMS has been an English instructor at Wayne Community College for the last thirteen years and a co-editor of WCC's *Renaissance* magazine for the last six. Previous work has appeared in *Renaissance* and in *Aphelion Webzine*. "Reconstructing the Whale" is his first professional publication.

LAURA MADELINE WISEMAN is a doctoral candidate at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, where she teaches English. She is the author of *Spring*, a full-length collection of poetry forthcoming from San Francisco Bay Press, as well as three chapbooks, *Branding Girls* (Finishing Line Press, 2011), *Ghost Girl* (Pudding House, 2010), and *My Imaginary* (Dancing Girl Press, 2010). Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in the *Broad River Review*, *Prairie Schooner*, *Margie*, *Arts & Letters*, *Feminist Studies*, *Blackbird*, *13th Moon*, *American Short Fiction*, *Poet Lore*, *The Fence*, *The Los Angeles Review*, and elsewhere. She has received an Academy of American Poets Award.

NANCY H. WOMACK is a retired educator who previously served as Dean of Arts and Sciences at Isothermal Community College. She holds a doctorate in English from the University of South Carolina in Columbia. Her poems have appeared in *Appalachian Heritage*, *The Thomas Wolfe Review*, *Teaching English in the Two Year College*, *Bay Leaves*, *The Mentor*, and in several anthologies published by Old Mountain Press. She enjoys, gardening, traveling, entertaining, reading, and being Nana to her two grandchildren.

HEATHER WYATT currently works in the technical department of a marketing company in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Her work has been published in *The Marr's Field Journal*, *The SDS News Bulletin*, *Public Republic*, and *Snakeskin*. She also has a forthcoming poetry publication in *Styrene Magazine*. She received her bachelor's degree in American Studies from the University of Alabama and her M.F.A. in poetry from Spalding University in Louisville, Kentucky.

The Broad River Review

2012

The Broad River Review is pleased to announce the reading period for Volume 44, which will appear in the spring of 2012. The Broad River Review welcomes submissions of original poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction, and we also encourage visual artists to submit samples for possible cover art.

Writers have two avenues for submission, either a general submission or a submission to our contest, The Rash Awards, which offers a \$500 prize in both Fiction and Poetry. All general submissions and contest submissions received during the reading period will be considered for publication. However, only official entries for The Rash Awards will be eligible for the prize awards.

Poetry submissions are restricted to five poems, with no more than ten pages total per submission. Fiction and nonfiction submissions must be no more than 5,000 words. All submissions must be typed. Simultaneous submissions are acceptable if our editors are notified immediately that the work has been accepted elsewhere.

SUBMISSION PERIOD

August 1 – October 31, 2011

General submissions should include a cover letter with contact information and a brief biographical sketch. General submissions may be submitted electronically via email to broadriverreview@gardner-webb.edu, which is preferred over regular mail submission. Send as a Microsoft Word attachment (.doc, docx, .rtf, or .txt). Submissions by regular mail should be sent to the address listed for the contest below, labeled as "General Submission."

Contest submissions must be accompanied by an entry fee of \$15 (U.S.), payable by check or money order to the *Broad River Review*. If no contest fee is included, the entry will be considered instead as a general submission. All contest entrants will receive a copy of the 2012 issue. Writers may submit multiple times in one or both genres, but each submission must include the required \$15 entry fee. Previously published poems and short stories, including web publications, are not allowed. For contest entries, please send a cover letter with complete contact information, a short biographical entry, and title(s) of your work. However, please do NOT include your name on your contest submission, as the contest judging is done anonymously. All manuscripts will be recycled after publication of the 2012 issue. Mark contest submission as "Poetry Contest" or "Fiction Contest" and mail to the following address:

The Rash Awards
c/o Broad River Review
P.O. Box 7224
Gardner-Webb University
Boiling Springs, NC 28017

For additional information or to ask questions, please contact the editors at
broadriverreview@gardner-webb.edu.